

ECCLESIASTICAL TRADITION.

B. A. HINSDALE.

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ECCLESIASTICAL TRADITION:

ITS ORIGIN AND EARLY GROWTH; ITS PLACE IN THE
CHURCHES; AND ITS VALUE.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

The Author's attention was first drawn to the subject here discussed by the following facts:

1. The Roman Catholic Church, whose communicants are fully one-half of the Christian world, places Tradition side by side with the Bible as a religious authority. The Greek Church, ranking next, perhaps, in numbers, follows the Roman Catholic, though at a considerable distance. The Anglican Church follows hard upon the footsteps of the Greeks. Then, nearer or farther, in the rear of the Anglicans, are found most of the Protestant sects, treading in the traditionary path. In fact, of all the millions who profess the Christian name, the vast majority, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, pay a greater or less deference to Tradition.

2. With the Protestant Reformation, or, rather, with the causes which produced that Reformation, began a conflict between Tradition and the Spirit of Inquiry that has not yet ended, and that is not likely soon to end. At the opening of this conflict, Tradition ruled not only the world of religion, but the world of thought. By degrees she has been driven out of the fields of science and philosophy; but in the field of religion, where she first set up her throne, Tradition still rules a vast empire. Religious questions of all sorts are now fiercely contested, and the contest does not promise soon to die away; but the grand underlying question is—What is the final Court of Appeal? What is the last authority in religion?

3. For centuries the grand religious movement has been forward toward more light and freedom. However, there is all the time a small movement rearward, along the easy and fascinating traditionary path—in the Anglican Church toward Rome, in the Protestant Churches either toward Rome or Canterbury. Dr. J. H.

Newman's Romeward movement, as traced in his "*Apologia Pro Vita Sua*," may fairly be said to have begun with Dr. Hawkins's sermon on "Tradition." A paragraph is quoted from that work:

"There is one other principle which I gained from Dr. Hawkins, more directly bearing upon Catholicism than any that I have mentioned; and that is the doctrine of Tradition. When I was an undergraduate, I heard him preach in the University pulpit his celebrated sermon on the subject, and recollect how long it appeared to me, though he was at that time a very striking preacher; but, when I read it and studied it as his gift, it made a most serious impression upon me. He does not go one step, I think, beyond the high Anglican doctrine—nay, he does not reach it; but he does his work thoroughly, and his view was original with him, and his subject was a novel one at the time. He lays down a proposition self-evident, as soon as stated, to those who have at all examined the structure of Scripture, viz: that the sacred text was never intended to teach doctrine, but only to prove it; and that, if we would learn doctrine, we must have recourse to the formularies of the Church—for instance, to the Catechism, and to the Creeds. He considers that, after learning from them the doctrines of Christianity, the inquirer must verify them by Scripture. This view, most true in its outline, most fruitful in its consequences, opened upon me a large field of thought. Dr. Whately held it, too. One of its effects was to strike at the root of the principle on which the Bible Society was set up. I belonged to its Oxford Association; it became a matter of time when I should withdraw my name from its subscription list, though I did not do so at once."*

His attention arrested by these most important facts, the Author began to enquire, solely for the satisfaction of his own mind, What is Tradition? How did it arise? What are the sources of its power? How is it regarded by the churches? What is its power in them? and, What is its value? When, as a result of much reading and thought, his views attained to measurable fullness and consistency, he reduced them to writing. They are now given to the public in the faith that they have a certain value, both as an essay in ecclesiastical history, and as a contribution to current discussion.

Let the reader take pains in the outset not to miss the Author's standpoint. He is not writing of traditions, but of Tradition. Believers in Tradition believe it to be an instrument of doctrine, an

* Fifth Edition, N. Y., pp. 60, 1.

organ of teaching, a channel through which divine communications have descended from Christ and the Apostles to our own times. This is the sense of the word in the title to this essay. Sometimes particular traditions will be mentioned, though more for illustration than for any other purpose. Tradition as now described is itself a tradition, and the most important of all. Tradition is a tradition through which other traditions flow. Its own basis and authority are traditionary. But it is the object of this book to examine the channel of transmission, the conducting pipe through which traditions flow, and not the stream that the pipe carries. A discussion of Tradition can thus be brought within narrow limits; but exhaustively to discuss ecclesiastical *traditions* would require a library.

For the most part the inquiry will be historical rather than critical. Sometimes dogmas that come to us by way of Tradition will be subjected to criticism, but the great purpose of the Author will be to get at historical truth. It has been said that the historical method of investigation, so widely used in our time, is but a poor method for determining the truth or value of the particular subject investigated. This is true: it does not claim to do more than to lay bare the origin and progress of its subject. Still we are never in so good a position to pass critical judgment on a doctrine, party, or church, as when the historical method has laid it open to us in its length and breadth. However, the doctrine of Tradition will be examined fully enough to disclose its fatal weaknesses.

PART I.

THE ORIGIN AND EARLY GROWTH OF TRADITION.

CHAPTER I.

TRADITION IN THE GENERAL SENSE.

We hear of the traditions of a family, a city, a political party, a commercial firm, a newspaper, a college, a country, the Church, or of one of the historical divisions of the Church. It will be a great point gained, to find out what is the most general meaning of the word.

The meanings of the Greek verb *παράδιδόναι*, and the Latin verb *tradere*, run parallel throughout. Their first and most general meaning is, to give or deliver over, to transmit, without any reference to what is delivered or transmitted; their second and more specific meaning, to deliver over or transmit some mental thing—a product of the mind. *Παράδοσις* and *traditio*, the conjugate nouns, have three meanings, also parallel: (1) The act of giving up, handing down, transmitting; (2) The act of transmitting some product of the mind—as a legend, saying, or doctrine—without regard to the means of communication, whether oral or written language; (3) The thing delivered, as the product of the mind delivered or handed down. The English language has no verb that is the equivalent of *παράδιδόναι* and *tradere*; but the noun *tradition* has three meanings similar to *παράδοσις* and *traditio*. First of all, it means the act of delivery. Blackstone says, “A deed takes effect only from the tradition, or

delivery." The second and third definitions are quoted from Webster's Dictionary:

"The unwritten or oral delivery of opinions, doctrines, practices, rites, and customs from father to son, or from ancestors to posterity; the transmission of any opinions or practices from forefathers to descendants, by oral communication, without written memorials."

This is the act of transmitting some product of the mind in a particular manner. The third definition springs out of the second:

"Hence, that which is transmitted orally from father to son, or from ancestors to posterity; knowledge or belief transmitted without the aid of written memorials."

It will be observed that the English word, in one respect, is narrower than the Greek or the Latin. It makes the instrument of transmission oral language; while the Greek and Latin words include both oral and written; in fact, the Latin rather prefers the written form. But it must not be supposed that the channel of transmission must forever remain oral speech, or that the tradition must always continue in an unwritten form; this element of the word relates rather to the original act of delivery, and to the early stages of the transmitting process, as will appear hereafter.

It is in the last of the three senses above enumerated that the word tradition is commonly employed. It is in this sense that we speak of the traditions of Scotland or of New England; that the Count de Chambord, in refusing, some years ago, to make concessions to French liberalism, was said to act in harmony with the traditions of the Bourbons; that Mommsen says, "We have no information—not even a tradition—concerning the first migration of the Aryan race into Italy;" and that Grote speaks of "the whole mass of traditions constituting the tale of Troy."

There is no reason to suppose that a discussion of tradi-

tion, either word or thing, would ever have covered more ground than that now enclosed, had not the word been used for ecclesiastical purposes, and been modified by ecclesiastical usage. Historians would have narrated traditions, and have sought to determine their value; tradition, as a source of knowledge, would have received some attention at the hands of critics; but it was left to the Church to fill our book-shelves with volumes of history and criticism pertaining to the subject. We shall best understand the ecclesiastical meaning of the word tradition, by searching out how the thing tradition originated, and what it is.

CHAPTER II.

THE DIVINE TRADITION.

It is difficult for men now living, especially for those who have never studied the Gospel as a tradition, to picture to their minds the Church of the first age. To do so, we must lay aside some of our most familiar and best established ideas of teaching Christianity; and then that age cannot be brought before our minds, as it was, without much study and a free use of the historical imagination. Let us try to reproduce one of its principal features.

Christ delivered His message in oral, not in written words. In one instance only is He said to have written anything, and then “He stooped down, and with His finger, wrote on the ground.”* He belonged to the class of great oral teachers; men who leave no written memorials behind them, as Socrates and Confucius, and yet profoundly influence the world. Nor was He attended by a scribe who kept a record of His words and works. There is no reason to suppose that the four Gospels, or any one of them, is composed, in whole or in part, of materials that were reduced to writing in His life. His Apostles carried on the work of evangelization in the same way. Their commission was : “Preach the Gospel to every creature” — “Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have

* John viii: 6.

commanded you.”* Under this commission, “they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.”† Aided by the Divine Spirit, they preached what they remembered of the life and teaching of Christ, and added what they were inspired to say in further development of the Gospel. In course of time, wherever they went, bishops or pastors were called up to teach and rule the congregations of disciples that had been planted. Of course, these bishops employed the same oral method. Not only so, they were wholly dependent for the substance of their instruction upon what had been orally communicated to them. Again, the Apostles called to their aid helpers named evangelists, ministers like Luke, Timothy, and Titus, who preached and taught orally, and were dependent upon what they had heard for their knowledge of the Gospel. These evangelists also ordained bishops, and raised up ministers like themselves, that the believers might be properly cared for and the world converted. Paul said to Timothy: “Keep that which is committed to thy trust;”‡ also, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”§ And, “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”|| De Pressensé has well said: “All the expressions employed in the New Testament to designate the proclamation of the new truth, set aside the notion of written documents.” “The Gospel was at first nothing but the proclamation of the good news of pardon,

* Mark xvi: 15; Math. xxviii: 20.

† Mark xvi: 20.

‡ I Tim. vi: 20.

§ 2 Tim. i: 13, 14.

|| *Ibid.* ii: 2.

flying from mouth to mouth.”* Christ Himself is called “the Word.”† “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”‡ The Gospel is “good tidings” “published” or “proclaimed;” a “word” “spoken” and “heard.” The “great salvation” began to be “spoken” by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”§ The human agent in carrying on the work is a herald, proclaimer, or preacher.|| Paul says to the Corinthians: “I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you;” “I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received.”¶ In the earliest period of its history, the Church of Corinth knew no more of Christ than had been delivered unto it orally. In a certain sense, the saying of Bossuet, in his “Exposition,” is true: “Christ Jesus laid the foundations of the Church upon the authority of preaching.” In the beginning, then, the Gospel was a tradition in the fullest sense; it was orally delivered and orally transmitted. To use a form of expression common with Catholic and Anglican writers, the deposit of the faith was confided to the Church; the treasure that we now have in the New Testament, the early Christians had only in earthen vessels,** that is, living preachers. Propagated in this way, the Gospel had made considerable headway before a single New Testament document was written. Christ spoke to men; inspired Apostles preached what they had received, and committed the same to faithful men, evangelists and pastors, who were able to teach others also, instructing them to hand down the doctrines delivered in like manner

**Jesus Christ: Times, Life, and Work*, London, 1868, p. 133.

† John i: 1.

|| Rom. x: 14.

‡ I Cor. i: 21.

¶ I Cor. xi: 23; xv: 3.

§ Luke ii: 10; James i: 23; Heb. i: 2; ii: 3. ** II Cor. iv: 7.

The earliest canonical Christian writings were epistles, probably written by Paul. This class of writings began to appear about twenty years after the close of Christ's personal ministry. No one of these writings contains a particle of evidence showing that the Gospel—the Evangelical Tradition—was in existence in a written form. It was quite natural that epistles should be written before gospels. The principal Gospel facts and teachings could very well be propagated during one generation by a ministry whose leading members had companied with the Lord, and who, moreover, were inspired; but in the young churches, although their members had a firm grasp of the cardinal Gospel truths, questions of vital importance would constantly arise; questions of spiritual life, of ecclesiastical discipline, of gifts and ordinances, that only the authority of an Apostle could settle. So much doctrine as sufficed to convert men and qualify them for Church membership, left a thousand things unsettled. Young Timothy was not the only disciple who needed to be instructed how to behave himself in the house of God. The relations of Christianity to Judaism and Pagan civilization had to be determined, and the law of love applied to the varied phases of human life. No doubt the Apostles did much of this work in their personal ministrations; no doubt pastors and evangelists did a good deal more; but the evangelical work of the Apostles prevented their becoming local ministers, and they were compelled to make up for their absence by writing letters. In these considerations, in great part, the Epistles find their explanation. From first to last, it is taken for granted that the churches are in firm possession of the Evangelical Tradition: so that the Epistles make no pretensions to being the fundamental books of our religion. Nor must it be forgotten that writing letters was a small part of the Apostles' labors, much smaller than preaching the Gospel.

When and by whom the first essays were made to reduce to writing the Evangelical Tradition, it is impossible to tell. It is probable, if not certain, that brief, fragmentary narratives were written, and to some extent circulated, before the appearance of our canonical Gospels. Nor is there anything violent in supposing that such writings were extant in the early part of the Apostolic age. At all events, before Luke wrote the third Gospel “many had taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which were most surely believed” by the Christians, “even as they delivered them” “which from the beginning were eye witnesses and ministers of the word.”* The things “delivered” and “believed” were the primitive tradition; and the “declarations” mentioned by Luke, as well as his own narrative, were attempts to commit this tradition to writing. Luke continues: “It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed”†—language which implies a recognition of the fate that must, in the long run, overtake every system of teaching that is dependent on oral transmission, as well as the imperfection of the “declarations” previously mentioned. In reducing the Gospel to writing, the Holy Spirit employed in part the pens of men who had no original or personal knowledge of the facts. Neither Mark nor Luke, so far as we know, had ever known the Saviour while he went in and out among men. According to ancient traditions preserved by Eusebius, Mark got his information from Peter;‡ while Luke “delivered in his own Gospel the certain account of those things which he himself had fully received from his

* Luke i: 1, 2.

‡ *Eccl. Hist.* ii: 15.

† Luke i: 3, 4.

intimacy with Paul, and also his intercourse with the other Apostles.* There can be no doubt that the primitive tradition was slowly assuming form, or rather forms, long before our Gospels were composed. The words and works that entered into one Apostle's recital were not in all cases those set forth by another; something was left to individual tone of thought and mental habit. The Gospel according to Matthew is no doubt the Gospel as Matthew was accustomed to preach it; Mark's, the Gospel as preached by Peter; and Luke's, the Evangelical Tradition as that writer had learned it from Paul and the other Apostles. John's, however, if we are to follow the Eusebian tradition,† is supplementary to the other three, and not the full story of Christ as John was accustomed to tell it. The Acts of the Apostles and the Apocalypse complete the canon of New Testament Scripture, which we may naturally divide into four divisions: A personal history of Christ; a history of evangelization and organization under the direction of the Apostles; a fuller unfolding and application of Christian doctrine; a map of the future history of the Church. I propound no theory of inspiration, but the Lord was with the authors of these writings; and the Holy Spirit, sent in His name, taught them all things, and brought all things to their remembrance, whatsoever He had said unto them.‡

We are now in a position to understand the word tradition as applied in the New Testament to the doctrine of Christ. It is found in three passages, two of which are

* *Eccls. Hist.* iii: 24.

† *Ibid.* iii: 24. Irenæus expressly says: "Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him."—*Against Heresies*, iii, 1, 1.

‡ John xiv: 26.

in the second letter to the Thessalonians. Paul says in one of them : “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us ;”* and in the other : “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”† All Catholic writers on tradition, and some Anglican, lay great stress on these passages, as proving that the tradition here referred to was something not found in the New Testament. What the passages mean, is clear enough in the light of the preceding discussion. The traditions referred to are the very substance of the Gospel, not something supplemental to it. They are what the Apostle had taught the Thessalonians of Christ; facts doctrines, precepts, and examples. More specifically, what these traditions were can be gathered from the Thessalonian letters themselves. Paul says, for example: “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.”‡ That is, they were already in possession of the Divine tradition on that subject. Again; when he says, “Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,”§ he is refreshing their minds in traditions that had been previously communicated. What is more, these traditions had been delivered in written as well as in spoken language; “whether by word or our epistle.” In the hands of Paul, *παράδοσις* means what it does in other Greek writings; something delivered, whether in oral or in written language. The traditions in the hands of the Thessalonians were Paul’s discourses and letters, no more and no

* II Thes. iii: 6.

† *Ibid.* ii: 15.

‡ I Thess. iv: 9.

§ *Ibid.* iv: 11, 12.

less. In the words of Jeremy Taylor, as quoted by Dr. Browne, the Bishop of Ely: “*Παράδοσις*, *tradition*, is the same with *δόγμα*, doctrine, and *παράδιδόναι* is the same with *διδάσκειν*, say the grammarians; and the *παράδοθεῖσα πίστις* in St. Jude, ‘the faith once delivered,’ is the same which St. Paul explicates by saying *παράδοσεις* ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, ‘the traditions,’ that is, the doctrines ye were taught.”* Jeremy Taylor in illustration cites Irenæus to the effect that Apostolical traditions were such as these: That Christ took the cup and said it was his blood; that men should believe in one God, and in Christ, who was born of a virgin.

The passages in the Second Thessalonians are the only ones where the Common Version renders *παράδοσις* as referring to the Gospel, by tradition. But the word is found with that meaning in First Corinthians xi: 2. In the Common Version the passage reads: “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. “Ordinances” should read “traditions”; that is, to quote Dean Alford on the passage, “The Apostolic maxims of faith and practice delivered either orally or in writing.”† The Corinthians had kept the *things delivered* as Paul had *delivered* them.

Παράδοσις is found thirteen times in the New Testament. Nine times‡ it refers to the traditions of the Jews, which both the Saviour and the Apostles always denounced in no measured terms. The three times where it refers to the doctrine of Christ have been noted above. Colossians ii: 8, where we read, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ,”

* *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, N. Y., 1870, p. 135.

† *New Testament for English Readers*, in *loc*.

‡ Matt. xv: 2, 3, 6; Mark vii: 3, 5, 8, 9, 13; Gal. i: 14.

the word may possibly refer to Jewish tradition, but seems to have a broader meaning. *Παραδίδουαι* is found one hundred and nineteen times, generally in the sense of giving or delivering over something. It is found in the well-known expression, "That form of doctrine which was delivered you,"* which should rather read, "Unto which ye were delivered."

Catholic writers, unwilling to rest their doctrine of tradition on a basis of tradition, claim that they have full authority for it in Scripture. Nothing more need be said to show the utter baselessness of this claim.

The writing and publication of the books composing the New Testament is an event of the first importance in the history of the Church. Their circulation greatly changed the method of propagating the Gospel, and of disciplining believers. And yet the immediate change was far less than anyone who has not closely studied the subject would suppose. The Epistles did not supersede, and did not aim to supersede, the oral Gospel. Their very nature made this impossible. On the other hand, they abound in exhortations to the disciples to continue in the things that had been delivered; they build on the foundation that the oral Gospel furnishes. No more do the Acts and the Revelation assume to set that Gospel aside. They, too, are supplemental to the Evangelical Tradition. Not until the publication of the canonical Gospels did anything authoritative appear that could take the place of the oral tradition. The circulation of these books is an event second in importance only to the primitive preaching. It is, in fact, a republication in a new form of the doctrine of Christ. To suppose, however, that the old form immediately gave way to the new, that oral tradition at once yielded to written memorials, would be to commit a very

* Rom. vi: 17.

great mistake. For a considerable period after the publication of the New Testament writings, the oral Christianity flowed on in a stream almost as broad and deep as before. The causes that operated to produce this result must now be stated :

1. A message that is intended to be universal, from the very nature of the case, must be orally propagated. In no other way can large masses of men be reached. Men were to be saved in all generations by the "foolishness of preaching," as much after the writing of the Gospel as before. No subsequent event in the history of the Church, such as the invention of printing, limits the command *to preach* the Gospel. In fact, the Christianity of to-day, and of every age, is to a considerable extent an oral Christianity. In a sense that is often hidden from us, Christ Jesus did lay the foundation of the Church upon the authority of preaching. In our age, however, this fact determines the method of teaching, and has nothing to do with the source from which the teaching is drawn. The great efficiency of oral communication, as compared with written, undoubtedly tended to perpetuate the oral form of the Evangelical Tradition.

2. The four Evangelists did not exhaust the stream of oral teaching. Many of the words and works of Christ were left unrecorded. John says expressly: "Many other signs truly did Jesus, in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book,"* his Gospel. The language of the last verse of John's Gospel, although hyperbolical, implies that the number of these things was very great. Nor did the other Evangelists write all that John left unrecorded. It seems to have been the purpose of the Divine Spirit to give us in the Gospels, not every

*John xx: 30.

word and deed of Christ, but a full view of His work. Certainly, what is recorded is all-sufficient for its purpose. John says: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through His name."* No doubt both works and words failed to become incorporated in the several forms of the Evangelical Tradition; no doubt, too, this narrowing process went on still farther when these forms were reduced to writing; but there is no reason to suppose that the oral Gospel contained anything characteristic of the Lord, either word or deed, that is not in kind represented in the written Gospels. As already remarked, it is fair to assume that Matthew wrote the Gospel as he had been accustomed to preach it; that Mark's Gospel is the measure of fact and doctrine delivered by Peter; that Luke wrote the substance of what Paul was accustomed to preach; though John seems to have written to supplement the Gospels of his co-Apostles. A considerable number of sayings attributed to Christ, not found in the Gospels, is found in the ancient literature of the Church, waifs on the stream of tradition. One such has received the sanction of Paul: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."† Neither did the Acts and the Epistles exhaust the stream of Apostolic teaching. Luke gives but a meager history of the Apostolic age. It is evident that his reports of sermons are very much abridged, and many sermons he did not report at all.‡ Indeed, it is clear that the greater part of the Apostles' teaching, in bulk at least, never became matter of record at all. Many interpretations of Scripture, many of the Lord's sayings, many exhortations, many decisions of casuistical and disciplinary questions, were never reduced to writing. In fact,

*John **xxi**: 25.† Acts **xx**: 35.‡ See Acts **ii**: 40; **xx**: 7.

one of Paul's Epistles was lost.* Whether the books that remain describe the full circle of Apostolic teaching, must be argued on general grounds. However that may be, the unrecorded words of Apostles, as well as their lost writings, formed a part of the broad stream of the Divine tradition. Whatever they said, wrote, or did, continued to circulate, like the words and works of Christ, in wider or narrower circles.

3. The written Scriptures were for a long time scarce and hard to be obtained. Owing to this fact, as well as to the greater efficiency of the preached Gospel, Christianity

*The proof of this statement is found in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Dean Alford reasons thus on the point: "In ch. v: 9, he [Paul] says: 'I wrote to you in my letter, not to company with fornicators.' In my note on those words, I have endeavored to shew that the only meaning which in their context they will legitimately bear, is, that this command, *not to associate with fornicators*, was contained in a previous epistle to them, which has not been preserved to us. Those who maintain that the reference is to the present epistle, have never been able to produce a passage bearing the slightest resemblance to the command mentioned. The opinions of commentators on this point have been strangely warped by a notion conceived *a priori*, that it would be wrong to suppose any Apostolic epistle to have been lost. Those who regard not preconceived theories, but the facts and analogies of the case, will rather come to the conclusion that *very many* have been lost. The epistle to Philemon, for example, is the only one remaining to us of a class, which, if we take into account the affectionate disposition of St. Paul, and the frequency of intercourse between the metropolis and the provinces, must have been numerous during his captivity in Rome. We find him also declaring, 1 Cor. xvi. 3 (see note there), his intention of giving recommendatory letters, if necessary, to the bearers of the collection from Corinth to Jerusalem: from which proposal we may safely infer that on other occasions, he was in the habit of writing such epistles to individuals or to churches. To imagine that *every writing* of an inspired Apostle *must necessarily have been preserved to us*, is as absurd as it would be to imagine that all his *sayings* must necessarily have been recorded. The providence of God, which has preserved so many precious portions both of one and the other, has also allowed many, perhaps equally precious, of both, to pass into oblivion." *New Testament for English Readers*, Introduction to I Cor. iv:2, 3.

continued to be propagated almost wholly by preaching. Large numbers of illiterate persons, especially in barbarous regions, were brought into the fold of Christ. To a very great degree, disciples had not the sources of original knowledge in their possession, or they were unable to use them ; from both which facts it followed that the oral Gospel was the great means employed by the ministry in instructing and disciplining the churches. Hence, the Gospel continued for a considerable period to be—what it still is, and must always remain, to many—an oral testimony. From the time the New Scriptures were written, the oral Gospel began to lean upon the written, and to be steadied by it ; and books began to stand to the evangelist and the pastor in the relation at first held by the traditions of Christ and of the Apostles.

4. Many of those disciples who had been converted by the oral Gospel, naturally preferred the spoken to the written word. “Those who had heard the living voice of the Apostles,” says Canon Westcott, “were unlikely to appeal to their written words.” “We have an instinct,” he adds, “which makes us prefer any personal communication to the more remote relationship of books.” This instinct dwells in every man. It is illustrated in a saying attributed by Eusebius to Papias, who, according to his own testimony, lived in a time of written Gospels. “I made it a point,” says he, “to enquire what were the declarations of the elders” [such as Andrew, Peter, and Philip]; “for I do not think that I derived so much benefit from books as from the living voice of those that are still surviving.”*

These causes kept the stream of oral testimony flowing after the stream of written testimony had appeared ; acting with other causes, to be mentioned by and by, they con-

**Ecclesiastical Hist.* III. 39.

tinued its flow until it was lost in the swelling stream of human tradition. Hence, the latter has its origin, not in the inventions of men two or three centuries after Christ and the Apostles, but rather in the corruption and undue prolongation of a stream originally pure, proceeding from inspiration itself. Here the question may occur, since neither the Gospels nor the Epistles say the stream of oral tradition is to cease, how do we know that such was the Divine intention? This question is both a natural and an important one, but the writer thinks it better to defer the answer until we come to treat of the value of tradition. Before going on to the next period, it will be well to give the usual divisions of the Divine Tradition :

Divided with reference to its sources, it consists of two parts: The Evangelical Tradition, the words and the works of Christ, *Traditio Evangelica*; the Apostolic Tradition, the words and the works of the Apostles, *Traditio Apostolica*. Divided with reference to its character, there are three parts : The Doctrinal Tradition, original facts and teachings, *Traditio Doctrinalis*; the Hermeneutical Tradition, sayings of Christ and the Apostles designed to explain older Scriptures, *Traditio Hermeneutica*; the Ecclesiastical Tradition, teachings concerning rites, ceremonies, and ecclesiastical questions, *Traditio Ecclesiastica*.

The Apostolic Tradition, for the most part, was reduced to writing before the Evangelical. The written Gospel was the same in substance with the oral. In the original sense of the word, all Evangelical Christians believe in tradition. Those who accept the Protestant principle profess to believe in no tradition but that found in the Bible.

Before the close of the second century, ecclesiastical usage began to limit *παράδοσις* to the unwritten teaching, rather, to the unwritten form of the teaching ; thus giving to the word a narrower meaning than it has in classical

Greek and in the New Testament. About the same time a distinct human tradition began to make its appearance in the Church. This appeared so gradually, it was so interwoven with the oral Gospel, that no historian can lay his finger on a point, and say, here the Divine tradition ends and the human begins; still, it is easy to discover how the human tradition was formed, and how it grew until the Roman Church put it on a level with the Bible.

CHAPTER III.

THE BEGINNING OF THE HUMAN TRADITION.

Many innovations in the doctrine and polity of the Church are traceable to the second and third centuries. One of these is the limitation of the word tradition to the unwritten Gospel. As this unwritten Gospel was continually becoming more and more corrupt, a word that had originally denoted both forms of Divine revelation, the spoken and the written, was finally appropriated to a human production. An examination of the Christian literature of the second century will show how this great change took place.

The writings of the Apostolic Fathers (A. D. 70-120) throw but little light on our enquiry. They abound in evidence showing the currency of the Gospel and of the Evangelical narratives, though the latter are not described in words. The letters of Polycarp, Ignatius, and Barnabas, and the Letter to Diognetus, contain a number of unmistakable quotations from the Gospels. Ignatius asks, "What shall a man be profited, if he gain the whole world but lose his own soul?"* Polycarp says, "Be mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged;' 'forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you;' 'be merciful, that ye may obtain mercy;' 'with what

**To the Romans*, vi.

measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again ;' and one more, 'Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of God.' " * Barnabas exhorts, "Let us beware lest we be found [fulfilling that saying], as it is written, 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' " † This is the first example of a citation from a New Testament book in the Fathers preceded by the formula, "it is written ;" its occurrence here proves that already the disciples have put the New Scriptures on the same level of authority with the old ones. These passages, as well as others that I need not quote, can be paralleled almost word for word in our canonical Gospels ; other quotations, less exact in form, are still more numerous. Now, there can be no doubt that these exacter quotations were made from our Gospels ; the less exact may have been taken from the oral testimony, though this is far from certain. They may have been quoted by memory from our Gospels. The following is an example of this second class : "The Spirit, as being from God, is not deceived. For it knows both whence it comes and whither it goes, and detects the secrets [of the heart]." ‡ The unwritten Gospel certainly existed in the age of the Apostolic Fathers. It could not so soon have disappeared ; it is also found in the next age. These Epistles have no trace of a doctrine or a habit of tradition, in the later sense ; some of them, however, reveal the existence of traditions. The episcopal system found in Ignatius, for example, is both a departure from the primitive constitution of the Church, and also the germ of the later hierarchy, in connection with which the human tradition was developed. The writings of the Apostolic Fathers abound, too, in quotations from the other books of the New Testament.

* I Epistle to the Philippians, ii.

† Epistle, iv.

‡ Ignatius to Philadelphians, vii.

Justin, the philosopher and martyr, is the most conspicuous figure of the next age. He sets forth no doctrine of tradition. Indeed, is silent as to the existence of any such thing in the Church. But, while his writings are like those of the Apostolic Fathers in this particular, they are unlike them in another: the written memorials of Christ are constantly referred to in words. He repeatedly mentions and quotes the "Memoirs of the Apostles," which, he says, "are called Gospels." At the same time, the verbal inexactness of many of his quotations seems to show that he often quoted from memory. What is more, he quotes a few passages, referring them to Christ, that are not found in our Gospels at all; though in these cases it should be remarked that he never says they are taken from the "Memoirs." Whence came these last quotations? The stream of oral testimony was still flowing in Justin's age, and there is no room to doubt that this is their source. In the words of De Pressensé, "Justin drank at the stream of oral tradition." If he had used the word tradition at all, he would have used it in Paul's sense. He says, for example: "The Apostles, in the Memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, said," etc.* Justin would have called this a tradition, as Irenæus does at a later day. Justin writes in defense of the faith, as an apologist, and his writings but poorly reflect the interior state of the Church. We cannot learn, therefore, from his writings, what progress, if any, the human tradition was making.

Passing to the close of the century, we discover at once that tradition has assumed a new prominence. The word no longer describes simply what had been delivered, without regard to the vehicle of communication, whether

* *The First Apology*, lxxvi.

spoken or written language; nor does it mean the Holy Oracles as written, the New Testament; it means rather the doctrine of Christ as handed down in the Church, through the successions of bishops. A study of the great writers of this age will make this perfectly clear.

Clement of Alexandria (160-220) represents the Alexandrian view of tradition, which is less positive and realistic than that of the Latin writers. He says: "As an honest man must not lie, so must we not depart from the rule of faith, which is handed down by the Church; it is necessary to follow those who already have the truth. As the companions of Ulysses, bewitched by Circe, behaved like beasts, so he who renounces tradition ceases to be a man of God."* He also speaks of "a rule of truth," called by him "the ecclesiastical rule," which, he says, is "the harmony of the law and the prophets with the covenant delivered by the Lord during his presence on earth."† Clement nowhere says or implies that what he calls tradition contains doctrines not found in the Scriptures; he values it as a support and interpreter of Scripture. The "rule" of which he speaks was probably a compendious theological system, or summary of the faith.

Tertullian frequently refers to tradition, and bases upon it controversial arguments. In his work entitled "Against Marcion," he confutes the proposition affirmed by that heretic, that Paul had preached a new God. After first quoting from the Scriptures, he appeals to tradition to prove that the Christian doctrine of God had not suffered corruption. "No other teaching will have the right of being received as Apostolic than that which is at the present day proclaimed in the churches of Apostolic foundation." He then argues that Marcion's doctrine is opposed to this teaching. "You will, however,

* *Miscellany*, vii: 15.

† *Ibid.* vi: 15.

find no church of Apostolic origin but such as reposes its Christian faith in the Creator"*; and he affirms that "the proof of his argument is sufficiently established" by the fact that "there was, from Christ down to Marcion's time, no other God in *the rule* of sacred truth than the Creator." Another example of the same kind of reasoning is given from the same treatise: "I am accustomed in my prescription against all heresies, to fix my compendious criterion [of truth] in the testimony of *time*; claiming *priority* therein as our rule, and alleging *lateness* to be the characteristic of every heresy."† He then quotes Colossians i: 5, 6, in confirmation of this rule: "For the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel; which is come unto you, as it is unto all the world." He calls the Gospel of the Apostles "the tradition of the Gospel," which shows that he had not lost sight of the sense in which Paul used the word. Nor is there anything in this passage which of itself shows that Tertullian understood the word in any other sense. That he did understand and use it in the ecclesiastical sense, which was now becoming current, is proved by other passages in his writings. One of these is the following:

"Our appeal, therefore, must not be made to the Scriptures; nor must controversy be admitted on points in which victory will either be impossible, or uncertain, or not certain enough. But even if a discussion from the Scriptures should not turn out in such a way as to place both sides on a par, [yet] the natural order of things would require that this point should be first proposed, which is now the only one which we must discuss: 'With whom lies that very faith to which the Scriptures belong? From what [original Giver], and through whom, and when, and to whom, has been handed down that rule by which men become Christians?' For wherever it shall be manifest that the true Christian rule and faith shall be, *there* will likewise be the true Scriptures and expositions thereof, and [indeed] all the Christian traditions."‡

* *Against Marcion*, i: 21. ‡ *Prescription Against Heretics*, xix.

† *Ibid.* v: 19.

Tertullian believed in Tradition and wrote upon it p. 33

Still another work of this voluminous writer contains this passage: "Of these and other usages, if you ask for the written authority of the Scriptures, none will be found. They spring from tradition, are confirmed by custom, and are ratified by belief."*

Nothing in Tertullian supports the propositions of the Catholics, that Scripture alone is not sufficient for salvation, and that there is Divine knowledge not found in Scripture. It will, therefore, be asked, if Tertullian did not find in tradition doctrine which is not contained in the Bible, why did he appeal to it in his controversies? The question is a most important one, and demands a satisfactory answer. Indeed, it is the pivot on which the whole argument turns. This answer is withheld until we have before us the testimony of Irenæus. It should be remembered here, however, that Tertullian does base usages, that is rites, on the authority of tradition, confessing that he can find no authority for them in Scripture; but his writings contain no intimation that he based doctrines on such authority. In the words of an Anglican writer: "He establishes the lawfulness of certain practices from Apostolic tradition, as we [Anglicans] do; but these practices or rites were not part of the revelation made by God."† But the practice of authenticating rites by the authority of tradition naturally led to authenticating doctrines in the same manner. But while Tertullian holds that Scripture can settle nothing for the heretics, since they have not the key to its meaning, he holds to its sufficiency and finality for believers. "I revere," he says, "the fullness of His Scripture, in which He manifests to me both the Creator and the creation."‡

* *Concerning the Soldier's Crown*, iv.

† *Palmer: Treatise of the Church of Christ*, London, 1839, ii: 31.

‡ *Against Hermogenes*, xxii.

It will be seen that Tertullian speaks of a compendious criterion and of a rule of faith. Chapter xiii of the *Prescription Against Heretics* shows that this criterion or rule was that ancient summary of the faith which came in time to be called the creed. It is :

“That which prescribes the belief that there is only one God, and that He is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word, first of all sent forth; that this Word is called His Son, [and] under the name of God, was seen ‘in divers manners’ by the Patriarchs, heard at all times in the Prophets, at last brought down by the Spirit and Power of the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and, being born of her, went forth as Jesus Christ; thenceforth He preached the new law and the new promise of the Kingdom of Heaven, worked miracles; having been crucified He rose again the third day; [then] having ascended into the Heavens, He sat at the right hand of the Father; sent instead of Himself the power of the Holy Ghost to lead such as believe; will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life and of the heavenly promises, and to condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both these classes shall have happened, together with the restoration of their flesh.”

We come now to the writer to whom we are indebted, more than to any other, for our knowledge of tradition at the close of the second century; the writer, also, who, more than any other of the early Fathers, built up the very thing of which he gives us such abundant information.

Irenæus often uses the word tradition in its original sense, something delivered and transmitted. For example: “The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the Apostles and their disciples this faith;” following with a summary of doctrine similar to that quoted above from Tertullian. Again: “For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same;”* in proof of which, he states that the Churches of Germany, Spain, Gaul, the East, West, and

**Against Heresies*, I. x: 2.

South agree in what they believe and hand down. These passages simply assert a unity of faith in the Church, and throw no light upon tradition in the ecclesiastical sense. They are consistent with the idea that the Word of God is found in Scripture alone. Other passages, however, will not bear this construction; for Irenæus, like Tertullian, lays great stress upon tradition as distinguished from Scripture. This is in his controversies with heretics.

Before beginning his argument on tradition, as though throwing an anchor to windward, lest he and his readers might drift on a dangerous shore, he says: "We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith."* From this passage, no one would infer that Irenæus understood that there were still unwritten doctrines of Divine authority. "The Gospel," not a part of it, "is handed down to us in the Scriptures," not in a floating tradition, "to be the pillar and ground of our faith." He then names the Gospels, and appeals to them as teaching that doctrine of God which he holds. Next, he describes the manner in which the heretics carry on controversy: "When, however, they are confuted from the Scriptures, they turn round and accuse these same Scriptures, as if they were not correct, nor of authority, and [assert] that they are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition. For [they allege] that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents, but *viva voce*."† He now charges them with dishonesty in making this appeal: "When we refer them to

**Against Heresies*, III. i. 1.

†*Ibid.* III. ii. 1.

that tradition which originates from the Apostles, [and] which is preserved by means of the successions of presbyters in the churches, they object to tradition, saying that they themselves are wiser, not merely than the presbyters, but even than the Apostles, because they have discovered the unadulterated truth. * * It comes to this, therefore, that these men do now consent neither to Scripture nor to tradition.”* He closes this chapter with calling the heretics “slippery serpents” seeking “to escape at all points;” “wherefore,” he says, “they must be opposed at all points, if, perchance, by cutting off their retreat, we may succeed in turning them back to the truth.”† These quotations furnish the key to Irenæus’s use of tradition, in his controversies with the heretics.

He now enters on his argument drawn from tradition to confute the heretics, and confirm the orthodox faith. “It is within the power of all, therefore, in every church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the Apostles, manifested throughout the whole world.” He points to “those who were by the Apostles instituted bishops in the churches,” and to “the successions of these men to our own times,” as the channel through which the Apostolic tradition had been delivered; affirming that these bishops “neither taught nor knew of anything like what these [heretics] rave about.”‡ “Since, however, it would be very tedious,” he says, “to reckon up the successions of all the churches,” he appeals to “that tradition derived from the Apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul;” adding the words so much relied on by every champion of the Roman See: “For it is a matter of

**Against Heresies*, III. ii: 2.

‡*Ibid*, III. iii: 1.

†*Ibid*. III. ii: 3.

necessity that every church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre-eminent authority; that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the Apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men], who exist everywhere.”* Next Irenæus traces the succession of the Roman bishops from Peter to Eleutherius, the bishop when the work “Against Heresies” was written, saying: “In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical traditions from the Apostles and the preaching of the truth have come down to us.” He also instances other churches, as Smyrna and Ephesus, as “true witnesses of the traditions of the Apostles.”

It is evident that, in these last passages, Irenæus does not use the word tradition to denote merely what had been delivered without regard to form; he means by it a body of teaching received and handed down in the churches, independent of the New Testament. The word is used in a strictly ecclesiastical sense. But he does not mean tradition in the Roman sense: Divine knowledge supplemental to what is found in the Bible. Of a tradition of this sort, the writings of Irenæus afford no trace whatever. In the following passage, as well as in one of those quoted above, he expressly holds to the sufficiency of Scripture: “The Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the word of God and His Spirit.”† He appeals to tradition as an independent, though not supplemental, source of Christian testimony. With the exception of the corruptions that time has wrought, this tradition is the oral Gospel of the first, second, and third ages. How important is the part played by this Gospel, is shown by the following extract: “Those who, in the absence of written documents, have believed this faith, are barbarians so far as regards our language; but as regards doctrine, manner,

* *Against Heresies*, III. iii: 2.

† *Ibid.* II, xxviii: 2.

and tenor of life, they are, because of faith, very wise indeed; and they do please God, ordering their conversation in all righteousness, chastity, and wisdom."* The stream of oral testimony, though more or less corrupted, was still flowing.

It cannot be too strongly insisted on that the tradition referred to by Clement, Tertullian, and Irenæus is not the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. It is not Divine knowledge over and above what is written in the Gospels and Epistles; it is, according to these writers, the same knowledge in another form. That a stream of teaching was still flowing which claimed to be the same stream that we find in the Apostolic age, no one can doubt; that this stream had become more or less impure, can easily be proved, though it is nowhere admitted by the Church writers of the period that such is the case. But it will be asked, if these writers know nothing of a tradition that is the vehicle of knowledge not found in the written word of God, why do they appeal to tradition at all? The answer, already once postponed, lies near at hand.

In the first place, there is no reason to doubt that, in the second half of the second century, the knowledge and discipline of the Church rested on the oral as well as on the written testimony. Why this was so, was shown in the last chapter. Hence it follows that, in the age of Irenæus, an argument based on tradition would, to many persons, be stronger and more vivid than an argument based on Scripture. But, secondly and principally, these great writers were engaged in a fierce controversy with heretics who held the Scriptures in but slight esteem. The heretics denied the canonicity of some books altogether, and were always ready with their speculative processes to refine away unwelcome arguments drawn from those books which they

* *Against Heresies*, II, iv: 2.

professed to acknowledge. When pressed with arguments from Scripture, the heretics did what Catholic theologians since the Reformation do: they said Christianity was originally an oral word; that the New Testament was defective and misleading, and that it must be supplemented by tradition. Hence, Tertullian and Irenæus appealed to tradition, not for proofs that could not be found in the Bible, but to show what had been continuously believed and taught on the disputed points in the oldest churches. Following Tertullian's criterion of *Time*, they seek to show that the Catholic doctrines are *old*, the heretical doctrines *new*. "Prior to Valentinus," says Irenæus, "those who follow Valentinus had no existence; nor did those from Marcion exist before Marcion; nor, in short, had any of those malignant-minded people, whom I have above enumerated, any being previous to the initiators and inventors of their perversity."* The argument against the heretics is equivalent to this: We waive for the time being the authority of books, and make an appeal to what has been handed down in all the churches from a period prior to the time when the books were written. In fairness, nothing more can be made out of these appeals than can be made out of similar appeals to antiquity now, by those who do not accept tradition, to settle controverted questions of theology and ecclesiastical polity. In our own time, controversialists who cannot settle their disputes within the Bible, go to the history of the ancient Church to brace up their reasonings. The Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, infant baptism, episcopacy, and a hundred other mooted questions, are argued both on Biblical and on historical grounds. Such a method does not differ in principle from the attempt to settle the meaning of an historical document, when its meaning may be in dispute, by *parole tes-*

**Against Heresies*, II, iv: 3.

timony. Already in the time of Irenæus the Church had an antiquity; he calls Papias "the ancient man;" and to this antiquity the fathers appealed to prove their positions. In this age the conception of a complete outward unity of the Church was taking possession of men's imaginations, a conception that grew, *pari passu*, with tradition and hierarchical authority; and this fact made it the more easy and natural for the orthodox writers to appeal to time as a test of truth.

It must be borne in mind that this appeal to tradition is very different from the one made by modern Catholics. The latter go to tradition because Scripture alone is defective, ambiguous, misleading; the former went to it saying: We can confirm and prove the teaching of Scripture by tradition. Hence this early appeal was rather a compliment to than a disparagement of Scripture.

In confirmation of this view, it may be said that the proofs urged against the heretical doctrines by Tertullian and Irenæus, reveal nothing peculiar to tradition. In these controversies they are maintaining fundamental Christian views. Tradition furnished them no arguments that were not also contained in the Scripture. Nor do they rest the argument against heretics on tradition alone. That they may "effectually oppose" the slippery serpents at all points, "cut off their retreat," and "turn them back to the truth," they appeal to both sources of evidence. Irenæus says: "Since, therefore, the tradition from the Apostles does thus exist in the Church, and is permanent among us, let us revert to the Scriptural proof furnished by those Apostles who did also write the Gospel, in which they recorded the doctrine regarding God, pointing out that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Truth, and that no lie is in Him."* He devotes much more space to the Scriptural

**Against Heresies*, III. v: 1.

argument than to the argument based on tradition ; as does Tertullian also.

That an appeal to the early history of the Church was natural, will hardly be disputed by those who make similar appeals now. Within certain limits, it was perfectly legitimate. Had it been made as a lawyer appeals to *parole* testimony, to settle disputed questions, no one could fairly deny its propriety or hold that it was abused. To settle cardinal doctrines and rites, the historical argument was fairly entitled to great weight ; but it was not entitled to much consideration when the nicer shades of teaching were in question. Tradition may faithfully preserve the salient features of a body of teaching, but it is idle to base on it nice criticisms. At the same time, the *argumentum ad verecundiam* is attended by many dangers, especially in religion, more especially still in ages when faith is a quicker principle than intelligence. There is a constant tendency to forget the real nature of such proof, and to regard the past with superstitious reverence. While, therefore, the writings of Irenæus do not contain the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition, they do reveal the habit of mind out of which that doctrine grew. "It is interesting," says Hagenbach, "to observe that, e. g., Irenæus does not as yet know any human tradition (*Traditio Humana*) within the Church which could in any way contradict the Apostolic tradition (*Traditio Apostolica*); such a tradition is known by Irenæus only among the heretics."* With all their affected reverence for antiquity, the Catholic doctors do not follow the example of the ancient Fathers ; in appealing from the Scriptures to tradition, and especially in affirming that the Inspired Books are defective and obscure, they borrow from the heretics whom Tertullian and Ire-

**Hist. of Doctrines*, N. Y. I. 97.

næus wrote to confute. But Irenæus is preparing the way for a human tradition, nevertheless ; it is hardly too much to say that one is springing up under his own hand. His successors are likely to carry his mode of reasoning too far; nay, he carries it too far himself. In searching for the criterion of truth, he says : " Suppose there arise a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient churches with which the Apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? For how should it be if the Apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary [in that case], to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the churches? " * Here Irenæus seems to reason as though the faith could have been preserved without Scripture, and as though the writing of the New Testament made no difference in the method of settling disputed questions. He was a man of ardent faith and piety, though not of very robust intellect ; had he been, he could hardly have failed to see that his method was liable to great abuses ; that it would strengthen tradition and weaken Scripture ; that, if the method of tradition were to be followed, antiquity would more and more overshadow the Church, shutting out all rays of light, save what came in through the patristic windows.

While the writings of Irenæus do not contain the Roman doctrine of tradition, they reveal a considerable corruption of the Christian faith. This appears most strikingly in his view of the Church, his ecclesiology. He exaggerates the importance of an external and visible unity in the Church. The phrase " Church Catholic " had become current, but

* *Against Heresies*, III. iv: 1.

Irenæus went farther in the same direction. His ecclesiology is thus summarized by Schenkel :

“ And the more the Gnostics concealed their Christianity from the uninitiated, and appealed to private Apostolical traditions, the more the orthodox Fathers and teachers of the churches felt themselves called upon to refer to the unity of the churches as a whole, which revealed itself in outward signs. One extreme almost necessitates the other. The Paganistic errors of the Gnostics provoked the orthodox teachers to new Judaistic extremes. Because the Apostles had counted as a member every one of whose faith they had credible proof, it became the practice to regard as having true faith only those who could first show their connection with the visible communion. It is Irenæus whose acuteness and energy first gives currency to this false principle. The maxim, *Ubi ecclesia, ibi et Spiritus Dei*, shows his position, and it is not outweighed by the converse, *Ubi Spiritus Dei, illic ecclesia et omnis gratia*. The Spirit is with him directly joined to the outward form of Church communion. He takes the Church as a pre-existent establishment, designed especially to propagate and maintain, *by tradition*, the pure doctrine. The Church as Christ's body is, with him, a system externally organized, whose essential organs are the bishops as successors of the Apostles. To renounce the episcopate is to apostatize from the truth. The possession of the truth is inseparable from the episcopal office. Peter and Paul are reckoned the founders of the Church in Rome; all believers belong to this Church, and only by the *successio* and *ordinatio* of the bishops is *vivificatrix fides*, the true faith, transmitted and preserved in the Church. Even Irenæus has but a wavering confidence in the Spirit of Truth, who dwells where he will. He thought there was no remaining barrier to the formidable spread of error in his time, but tradition, held in fixed limits; still, he would not leave even that tradition to the free impulse of the spiritual motion, but subject it to established official supervision. We must, hence, beware of heresies, not merely because they are false, but also because they are contrary to the Church tradition, to episcopal authority. Separation from the traditional Church is equivalent to rising up against the truth. (*Adv. Haer.* iv. xxxiii, 7)”*

Irenæus's error culminates in the position that he assigns to the Church of Rome. “ It is a matter of necessity,” he says, “ that every church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre-eminent authority.” He does not base this claim on a pretended primacy of Peter, but on the fact that this Church has preserved the Apos-

**Herzog's Real Encyclopædia*, Phila. 1860, art. “Church.”

tolie tradition unchanged. But a claim of "pre-eminent authority," urged by a man of Irenæus's prominence and weight, on whatever grounds, could not fail materially to strengthen the Roman claim, and to give support to reasons that never entered his mind.

The discussion of the value of tradition is reserved for the third Part of this work. But it should here be pointed out that, as early as the days of Tertullian and Irenæus, it was in dispute what tradition was, the heretics claiming that it was one thing, and the orthodox another. In fact, there were practically two traditions. This divided opinion sprang out of the very nature of tradition. Men who could not agree upon the meaning and authority of written documents, were not likely to agree upon what had never been written at all. This difficulty has confronted each succeeding generation of men who have sought to find Christianity in the traditions of the Church. What had been handed down orally, was in dispute when Tertullian and Irenæus wrote: so the record that they made of it itself became a matter of dispute. As the factions of the second century could not agree upon what they had received by tradition from the Apostles: so the factions of later times cannot agree upon what they have received from the Fathers. Herein is revealed the fatal weakness of this method of determining truth. Grant that Irenæus found a living Apostolic tradition which he reduced to writing, how can we be sure that his record, made by an uninspired man, was a faithful one? And since it was not protected by the veneration and affection that served to protect the Bible, how can we be sure that the record has not been corrupted? It cannot be an edifying spectacle for Anglicans to see Irenæus putting down one generation of heretics by arguing that they have misunderstood antiquity, and then to see later writers ac-

counted orthodox putting down later heretics by arguing that they have misunderstood Irenæus. For the Anglican or the Old Catholic to untie this knot, is impossible. The Romanist cuts it square across by asserting the inspiration of the Church, or the infallibility of the Pope.

The facts presented in this chapter show conclusively that a distinctly human tradition had appeared in the Church before the close of the second century. Closely analyzed, the new tradition will be found to consist of two elements :

1. Certain innovations have been made in the faith and polity of the Church; that is, certain doctrines and rites never delivered by the Apostles are regarded as parts of the Divine tradition. As examples, the episcopate, as expounded by Ignatius and Irenæus, and the "priority" of Rome may be mentioned.

2. Out of the practice of appealing to tradition, the origin of which has been traced, has grown a doctrine of tradition. It is held that oral transmission is a permanent source of Divine knowledge. I call this an innovation or human invention. True, the oral deliverances of Christ and of the Apostles were authoritative, as explained in the last chapter; but further on I shall attempt to prove, what here I assume, that, according to the Divine intention, the written word was to be the sole standard of truth. Accordingly, the assumption that oral communication is a fixed channel of teaching, is a human invention, and one that becomes traditional. Thus the doctrine of tradition is one of the traditions, and the most powerful of them all; *παράδοσις* has undergone, or is undergoing, a change of meaning. Both in classic and in New Testament Greek, it is either an oral or a written communication; but now it is being limited to an exclusively oral tradition, handed down in the successions of the bishops. Tradition is one thing,

Scripture another; perhaps not so much in substance as in form and in name. Irenæus's use of the word is narrower than Paul's. To change the expression, the traditional habit of mind, the habit of appealing to antiquity as a standard of truth, has taken firm hold of the Church teachers; not, however, the antiquity shown in the New Testament, but the one revealed in the continuous life of the Church.

Before the close of the second century, then, the Church was weaving that net of tradition in which the souls of men became ensnared, and remained ensnared until the Protestant Reformation tore it asunder; and in this net the strongest thread is the belief that tradition is authoritative. It is not a little remarkable that the ministers of a Church whose Author and Head denounced one human tradition as "making void the law of God," should almost immediately begin the elaboration of another one; but such is the fact. We are now to follow the history of their work into a later period. .

CHAPTER IV.

THE HUMAN TRADITION IN THE SECOND STAGE.

From Irenæus to Augustine, and onward to Gregory the Great, tradition continued to unfold. We cannot follow the evolution step by step, but some general facts must be explicitly stated.

Doctrines and rites unknown to the Apostles, but invented by men, in continually increasing numbers, were receiving recognition in the Church. Tradition was more and more relied upon as an instrument of teaching and a source of authority; more and more it became a doctrine. Greeks and Anglicans hold that there was a long Christian antiquity, marked by doctrinal purity and ecclesiastical unity. This period they bring to an end at the time to which this chapter reaches; and what they call the "Roman errors," they say, were subsequently developed. This antiquity, as we shall see later, they make the mirror of Christianity. The claim is an idle one. It is absurd to hold that innovations came into the Church at once, at or about the year 600, like a young flood; that the Roman division suddenly lost her purity; or that the Scriptures were pushed aside by a stroke to make room for human authority. The "mystery of iniquity" was at work in Paul's day; it diffused itself gradually, and did not become fully manifest for centuries. Most, or all, of the so-called

“Roman errors” existed in a high stage of development long before the time of Gregory the Great. If any man doubt it, let him read Isaac Taylor’s “Ancient Christianity.” The antiquity of the Greek and Anglican minds, therefore, has no objective existence. But while in this period tradition is more and more trenching upon the ground of Scripture, the distinctive Roman doctrine, although but a fuller unfolding of the earlier one, is of a later day, viz.: that Scripture is defective and insufficient for salvation. In the words of Principal Cunningham :

“In the writings of the Fathers of the first three centuries—and the same may be said of the writings, without exception, of many succeeding centuries—there is not the slightest trace of anything like that depreciation of the Scriptures, that denial of their fitness, because of their obscurity and alleged imperfection, to be a sufficient rule or standard of faith, which stamp so peculiar a guilt and infamy upon Popery and Tractarianism. There is nothing in the least resembling this; on the contrary, there is a constant reference to Scripture as the only authoritative standard.”*

From Tertullian to Augustine, the Fathers are binding the Church, themselves included, more and more firmly with the cords of tradition; yet they continually declare their liberty, and assert the authority of the Bible. Their voices ring out clear in such passages as these:

Irenæus, (120–202): “The Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they are spoken by the word of God and His spirit.”† “We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in Scripture, to be the ground and pillar of our faith.”‡

Tertullian, (160–220): “I reverence the fullness of His

**Historical Theology*, vol. I: pp. 185, 6.

†*Against Heresies*, II, xxviii: 2.

‡*Ibid.* III, i: 1.

Scripture, in which He manifests to me both the Creator and the creation.” *

Origen, (185-253): “The two Testaments, * * in which every word that appertains to God may be sought out and discussed, and from them all knowledge of things may be understood. If anything remain, which Holy Scripture doth not determine, no third Scripture ought to be had recourse to.” †

Hippolytus, (198-236): “There is one God, whom we do not otherwise acknowledge, brethren, but out of the Sacred Scriptures. * * Whosoever will exercise piety toward God, can learn it nowhere but from the Holy Scripture.” ‡

Athanasius, (296-372): “The Holy and Divinely Inspired Scriptures are of themselves sufficient to the enunciation of truth.” “In these alone the doctrine of salvation is contained. Let no one add to, or take from them.” §

Cyril of Jerusalem, (315-386): “Concerning the divine and holy mysteries of the faith, even the most casual remark ought not to be delivered without the Sacred Scriptures.” ¶

Basil, (328-379): “Believe those things which are written; the things which are not written seek not.” “It is a manifest defection from the faith, and a proof of arrogance, either to reject anything of what is written, or to introduce anything that is not.” ¶

Ambrose, (340-397): “How can we use those things which we find not in the Scriptures?” **

* *Against Hermogenes*, xxii.

† *Homily V in Levit.*

‡ *Against the Heresy of Noetus*, ix.

§ *Festal Epist.* xxxix; *against the Gentiles*, I.

¶ *Catechism*, iv: 12.

¶ *Homily xxix; Concerning Faith*, I.

** *Offic.*, i: 23.

Chrysostom, (347-407): "Look for no other teacher; thou hast the Oracles of God; none teaches thee like these."*

Jerome, (345-420): "We deny not those things which are written, so we refuse those which are not written." He then mentions one doctrine, saying, "We believe, because we read;" another, "We believe not, because we read not."†

Augustine (354-430): "In those things which are plainly laid down in Scripture, all things are found which embrace faith and morals.‡"

Vincent of Lerens: "The canon of Scripture is perfect, and most abundantly sufficient for all things."§

Theodoret: "Bring not human reasonings and syllogisms; I rely on Scripture."||

The above are only a few of the testimonies of similar tenor, collected by those who have gleaned the field of ancient Christian literature. They echo the constant voice of antiquity. It was only in times comparatively recent that the Roman Catholic Church made the attempt to put the Scriptures out of sight. Still, in this very period tradition was more and more overshadowing the ecclesiastical mind. The very writers quoted above are not consistent with themselves. When they define the standard of faith, they give an increasing weight to the authority of the Church and a diminishing weight to the authority of Scripture. They call the Bible the rule of faith; but say it can be understood only by those who are in the Church, and who are, therefore, in possession of the traditional key. As was shown in the last chapter, Tertal-

**Homily ix, on Colossians.*

§*Commonitor, II.*

†*Adv. Helvidium.*

||*Dialogue 1.*

‡*Concerning the Doctrine of Christ, II: 9.*

Most of the above quotations may be found in the Bishop of Ely's Exposition of the XXXIX Articles, pp. 147-149.

lian asserts that in the Church "are the true Scriptures and expositions thereof, and all the Christian traditions." Basil the Great, says: "Among the points of belief and practice in the Church, some were delivered in writing, while others were received by Apostolic tradition in mystery, that is, in a hidden manner; but both have an equal efficacy in the promotion of piety; nor are they opposed by any one who is but slightly versed in ecclesiastical rites."* Basil holds that tradition is a sufficient authority for rites, but he makes no such claim in the case of doctrines. Nor is it irrelevant to remark, that rites were rested on the authority of tradition long before doctrines were. Epiphanius, also, says concerning rites: "We must look also to tradition, for all things cannot be learned from Scripture. For which reason the Holy Apostles left some things in writing and others not."† Also Chrysostom: "Hence, it is plain they did not deliver all things by epistle, but many without writing; yet the latter are worthy of faith like the former. Therefore, let us hold the traditions of the Church to be worthy of faith. It is a tradition; seek nothing more."‡ Also Augustine: "I could not believe the Gospel unless the authority of the Catholic Church led or moved me," which proves, according to Hagenbach, "That Augustine considered the believer (subjectively), but not the Bible (objectively), to be dependent on that authority."§ What Augustine did mean in saying he could not believe the Gospel without the authority of the Church, has been the subject of much dispute. The author just quoted says his language is equivalent to this: "The authority of the Church is the witness for the divinity of the Scriptures; for how could I convince unbelievers, if I were not permitted to appeal

* *Concerning the Holy Spirit*, xxvii. ‡ *Homily iv, on II Thess.*, iii.

† *Heresies*, 61.

§ *Hist. of Doctrines*, I, p. 316.

to the authority of the Church? I must depend on this to know what the canon of Holy Writ is, and its right interpretation.”*

All of the Fathers just quoted are on record as attesting the sufficiency of Scripture. Still, a tendency more and more to emphasize tradition is clearly apparent in their writings. Hagenbach says: “It was rather the case in ecclesiastical controversies and elsewhere, the Bible was appealed to as the highest authority; also in practice most urgently recommended to the people. It was constantly held in reverence as the purest source of truth, the Book of Books.” In one of his controversies, Augustine proves the authority of the Church from the Bible, allowing no argument to be valid which was not drawn from this source. Sometimes it was asserted that tradition should be tested by Scripture, in respect both to rites and doctrines. Thus Cyprian, in his controversy with Pope Stephen about heretical baptism, appeals from the Roman tradition, and “goes back,” in the words of Hagenbach, “from the dried up canal to the source, to the oldest tradition, viz: the Sacred Scriptures. (*Divinæ Traditionis Caput et Origo.*)”† In the same controversy, Cyprian declares, that “Custom without truth is the antiquity of error.” Tertullian sharply says: “Christ gave Himself the cognomen of Truth, not of custom;” and adds: “Whatever has a savor against the truth is heresy, although an ancient custom.” In these later quotations, we may see how some of the Fathers shrank from wearing the heavy yoke of custom that they were binding upon the necks of their brethren.

It should be added that tradition in the West differed considerably from tradition in the East. The former was positive and realistic, depending on the external unity of

* *Hist. of Doctrines*, I, p. 316.

† *Ibid.* I, p. 97.

the Church; while the latter, especially in the school of Alexandria, was more idealistic and subjective, in fact, almost an esoteric doctrine. These two views exhibit the hard, practical tendency of the Latin mind, and the speculative tendency of the Grecian mind.

Besides, tradition had its mystical and secret side. Especially was this true in the East. Here there are unmistakable traces of an attempt to make the Church, instead of a popular communion open to all the world, a secret corporation. A volume would be required to give the history of this attempt. The Gospel could not be understood outside the Church; in the ecclesiastical corporation was the key to the meaning of Scripture. One of the theories put forth to explain the meaning of "Symbolum," a term early applied to the Creed, is that it was analogous to the pass-words of secret societies—a sign by which members of the Christian society could be known. A disposition to surround the Church with the obscurity and fascination of mystery, by making it a close corporation, would not overlook the excellent opportunity to accomplish its purpose furnished by tradition. Hence, the mystical side of this doctrine. It would be too much to say the Church ever wholly lost its popular character and became a secret organization, transmitting a secret mystical doctrine known to the initiated and carefully concealed from the rest of the world; but to a considerable extent this was the case. This secret, mystical side of tradition finds its explanation in such considerations as these: The natural desire in an age of persecution to find security in secrecy; an assimilation, conscious or unconscious, on the part of the Church to the secret societies and schools that abounded in the East; and the great opportunity to increase their power that a half secret, half-mystical tradition presented to the clergy.

In the period with which we are now dealing, what is called the Apostolical Tradition took on a new form ; it was reduced to writing, and ceased to be an oral communication. In fact, this change had commenced in the second century. As this was an important change in the form, and even in the nature of ecclesiastical tradition, it must be described somewhat at length.

The laws of England are of two kinds, the common law and the statute law: *Lex non scripta* and *lex scripta*. The written or statute law is that law which was originally promulgated, principally by the legislature, in a written form called statutes, acts, or edicts. The unwritten or common law, according to Blackstone, "includes not only general customs, or the common law properly so-called, but also the particular customs of certain parts of the kingdom; and likewise those particular laws, that are by custom observed only in certain courts and jurisdictions." He cautions the reader, however, against supposing that the unwritten law is "at present merely oral, or communicated from the former ages to the present solely by word of mouth." He then proceeds to show that the unwritten law is in fact written: "The monuments and evidences of our legal customs are contained in the records of the several courts of justice in books of reports and judicial decisions, and in the treatises of learned sages of the profession, preserved and handed down to us from the times of highest antiquity."* Accordingly, the common law is *unwritten* in the sense that much of it was not written in the beginning, and in the sense that none of it was promulgated in the form of statutes, as are the acts of Parliament.

There is an obvious analogy between the common law of England and tradition. In one sense both are unwritten; in another sense both are written. It must

**Commentaries*, i : 63, 4.

not be supposed that tradition, although at first unwritten, has never been reduced to writing; that it continues an oral communication, floating on the air from age to age: an esoteric doctrine handed down by word of mouth within the hierarchy; that it was kept alive, as songs sometimes have been, and as the rabinnical traditions were, by oral repetition. Even the staunchest advocate makes no such claim. Of course, the first appeals to oral tradition were oral themselves; but in no case could tradition be effectually appealed to without stating what the voice of tradition was. Just so soon, therefore, as men began, in written documents, to build upon tradition, tradition began to be reduced to writing. Besides, the very perishableness of an oral communication would lead those who venerated antiquity to give it a more permanent form. Eusebius gives us an example of this in the case of Ignatius. As this Father was carried a prisoner through Asia, "he exhorted them to adhere firmly to the tradition of the Apostles; which, for the sake of greater security, he deemed it necessary to attest by committing it to writing."* It was to secure this end that he is represented as writing his various epistles. The principle in harmony with which Ignatius acted, is a sound one; it is recognized in the Scriptures themselves; rightly applied, it cuts away the ground on which any tradition later than the middle of the second century claiming to be authentic can stand. If Ignatius thought it necessary, at the opening of the second century, for "the sake of greater security," to reduce tradition to writing, what shall be said of a pretended oral tradition a century or two later? Partly from the very nature of historical and controversial literature, partly from affection, what purported to be the unwritten word of God, in course of time, was reduced to writing. Those who espouse tradi-

**Eccl. Hist.*, iii : 36.

tion do not agree how far the analogy of the common law holds good. Roman Catholics say it holds in this: As the common law contains matter not found in the written law, so tradition contains doctrine not found in Scripture: but this most Anglicans and Old Catholics deny.

To use another illustration: Reference was made in the first part of this essay to the Count de Chambord's adherence to the traditions of his house. Where are those traditions to be found? Not, indeed, in didactic treatises. Nor have they been handed down in a private and secret way in the successions of the family. They must be sought for in the history of the Bourbons, and this is written in the annals of modern France.

How long a really divine tradition continued to flow in an oral channel, or at what time the original oral testimony, through corruption, lost its identity and practically ceased to exist, no one can tell. For prudential reasons, if for no other, it is not best to draw water from this stream after the completion of the New Testament canon. No doubt much of what passed as tradition in the third and fourth centuries had been drawn originally from the Bible. Nor can we precisely tell to what extent the stream had been corrupted. Certain it is that its swollen current now bore along numerous innovations in the faith and polity of the Church. But these questions need not here detain us. It is enough to know that, sooner or later, the traditions of antiquity were written, and that they could no longer be certified except by appealing to books. As the common law is not an oral communication, handed down in the English judiciary or in the Inns of Court, but is drawn by the learned in the law from old decisions and treatises; so the tradition of the ancient Church does not float on the air, but is drawn by theologians and ecclesiastical jurists from ancient Church literature. The literature of

the Church, the writings of Fathers, the edicts of Popes, the decisions of Councils, contain everything that is called tradition.

To believers in tradition, the so-called Catholic literature of the ancient Church is practically a bible, though confessedly written by uninspired men. To appeal to it as a Divine authority, is to have recourse to what Origen calls a "third Scripture." Just what documents are Catholic, what Fathers, edicts and decisions, describe the circle of ancient catholicity, at what time the last *scintilla* of Divine truth became fixed in written words—are questions in dispute among believers in tradition; but that tradition has all been reduced to writing, is agreed on all hands. Once more, all such believers hold to the formula of St. Vincent: "That is to be believed which has been received always, everywhere, and by everybody:" *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus, creditum est*. In our day Greeks, Latins, Anglicans, and Old Catholics unite in holding that this rule is the measure of Christian doctrine. However, the rule gives very different results when it is applied by different hands. Moreover, according to the Catholic view, tradition, although all reduced to writing centuries ago, may not have been defined in articles of faith at any given time.

Even the casual reader will notice the frequent occurrence of the phrase "Church authority;" he will also notice that it has been used as nearly synonymous with tradition. The relation of the two, when the ecclesiastical system had reached its full development, will be considered when we come to treat of tradition in the Roman Catholic Church; here it is enough to say, their relation is that of antecedent and consequent. The ancient Church held that the word of God, both written and unwritten, had been entrusted to her care; she was to hand

it onward; also to hand on the hermeneutical tradition. Out of this claim grew immediately and necessarily the claim of authority in the hierarchical sense. If she was divinely appointed to deliver doctrine, men were divinely commanded to receive it at her hands. Whenever, therefore, she declared tradition, either by delivering the unwritten word or interpreting Scripture, she was moving in the sphere of authority.

However, even at this early day the Church asserted an authority that sprang from another source. Almost from the first, as will appear fully in the next Part, two principles, different, if not antagonistic, have struggled for the mastery—tradition and inspiration, “The belief in the inspiration of Scripture neither excluded faith in an existing tradition,” says Hagenbach, “nor in a continuance of an inspiration of the Spirit.”* He says: “Not only transient visions, in which pious individuals received divine instructions and disclosures, were compared to the revelations recorded in Scripture, but still more the continued illumination which the Fathers enjoyed when assembled in council.” The Councils borrowed the Apostolic formula, “It seemeth good to the Holy Spirit and to us:”† *Visum est Spiritui Sancto et nobis*. Constantine called the decrees of Nice “a Divine command;” Athanasius said, “What God has spoken by the Council of Nice abides forever;” Gregory the Great put the first four Councils on a level with the four Gospels; and the Emperor Justinian equalized them with the Scriptures‡. The doctrine of a perpetual inspiration seems to have grown out of the doctrine of tradition, and yet in some sense it is the higher claim. The former and not the latter appears to be the immediate antecedent of the dogma of papal infallibility

* Vol. I., pp. 323, 4

† Acts xv: 28.

‡ Schaff's *Hist. of the Church*, II, pp. 341, 2.

In a rapid way I have now followed the thread of tradition to the doors of the Mediæval Church. That vast labyrinth I do not propose to enter. In that period of dense ignorance and growing priestly power known as the Dark Ages, we may be sure no backward step was taken. All through the middle age the Church went on spinning the thread and winding itself up in the cocoon of tradition, until her spiritual life was almost smothered. At the point where this historical sketch terminates, only one step remained to be taken to bring the Church to the ground occupied by the Roman Catholic communion previous to the Council of the Vatican—to declare the Scriptures insufficient for salvation, and to degrade them to a level with tradition. When and by whom this was first suggested, I do not enquire. Its first distinct authoritative affirmation was by the Council of Trent, as we shall see hereafter.

CHAPTER V.

SOME PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF THE HUMAN TRADITION.

It is well known that, in the time of Christ, the heart of the Old Testament had been eaten out by tradition. This tradition consisted partly of human additions to the Divine law; partly of constructions or interpretations that, like the "fictions" of the civil law, cut away the very law which they professed to make plain. Christ called it a "tradition of men," and said "it made void the law of God." With the Jewish example before them, and the denunciations of Christ fresh in their minds, the Christian ministry might perhaps have been expected to keep the new Church free from such parasitic growths. In fact, however, they fell an easy prey to this greatest enemy of spiritual religion. When we have considered the main causes that brought about this result, we shall no longer wonder that such was the case.

Society is a balance of two forces—conservatism and progress. As Mr. Bagehot puts it, "getting a fixed law," and "getting out of a fixed law;" "cementing a cake of custom," and "breaking the cake of custom;" "making the first preservative habit, and breaking through it and

reaching something better.”* The latter, he very justly says, is the more difficult step. Still, without a conservative habit there would be no continuity in human life; each day would begin anew, having no relation to the one that went before; there would be neither habits nor acquisitions, and real progress would be impossible. All human discipline comes from doing over and over again the same thing. We need not wonder, then, at the strength of the conservative habit, or the firmness of the cake of custom. The very difficulty with which the second step in civilization is taken, shows the power of the conservative habit. In fact, conservatism is exceedingly vigorous in all departments of life; so vigorous that it becomes a hindrance to the civilization that cannot exist without it. What is more, the affiliation of religion and tradition, which is the essence of conservatism, is remarkably close; religious faith and feeling entwine themselves about antiquity. The sentiments of veneration and reverence treat with great respect whatever has been delivered by the Fathers, and do not carefully inquire what has been so delivered. Besides, piety is here strengthened by both pride and laziness. As a result, the “machine” habit of mind—which is the method of tradition—nowhere plays a greater part than in the field of religion.

Considering only the facts just set forth, we might have expected that conservatism would have held the Jews fast to their Law, and the Christians to their Gospel, thus preventing, in both cases, the fungus growths of human tradition. But here the fact of movement or the principle of progress comes into play, and tends to break up the cake of custom. In early times, no sooner was a law firmly established than the innovating spirit began its subversion.

**Physics and Politics*, p. 53.

The process of commenting, adapting, and refining began : to fit the law to existing needs, the judges cut off a little here and added a little there : "fiction." *although professing to preserve the law, and really preserving the name and form, virtually made it all over. In the meantime the people, holding antiquity in the greatest reverence, and not dreaming what was going on, clung firmly to the code of the fathers, as they thought, although really clinging to one becoming in some sense new every day. Even with its conservative bias, the human mind cannot stand strictly still ; it will move either backwards or forwards ; and nothing is risked in saying, no tradition that really touched human life ever continued wholly the same for one hundred years. No better illustration of this fact can be given than the Roman Catholic Church. Tradition is one of the most marked features of the Roman mind : the Church's measure of faith is *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* ; her proud boast is *semper eadem*.—still her history shows that from the days of Gregory the Great she has all the time been on a slow march away from her own antiquity.

A Divine law admits of no additions except from its original source ; hence, it leaves no room for development save in the field of commentary and adaptation to changing wants and states. Loyalty to a Divine law does not, as sometimes charged, involve immobility, which is spiritual death. It allows a constant exposition and adaptation ; also what historians call an "historical

*I do not know that any writer has noticed the analogy of tradition and what lawyers called "fiction." Sir Henry Sumner Maine thus defines fiction: "Any assumption which conceals or affects to conceal the fact that a rule of law has undergone alteration, its letter remaining unchanged, its operation being modified." "The *fact* is that the law has been wholly changed; the *fiction* is that it remains what it was."—*Ancient Law*, chap. ii.

development."* Disloyalty begins when the new commentary or adaptation, made for any reason, as to meet new conditions, comes to be considered an authoritative rule itself. That is "making void the law of God" by the traditions of men, and constituted the peculiar offense both of the Jewish rabbis and of the Christian clergy. The tradition principle is at work whenever and wherever the historical development is taken as a standard of truth. More commonly those who create the new law suppose they are simply expounding the old one. Hence, tradition is largely an unconscious creation, and is more an indirect than a direct invention of men. It is more the work of the general than of the individual consciousness.

The general causes that produced the ecclesiastical tradition reside in the human mind; but they worked under conditions most favorable to their power. None of these causes were more prominent than these:

1. The Gospel was first an oral testimony.
2. The prevalent ignorance, especially after the Dark Ages set in, compelled the Church teachers to rely almost wholly upon oral teaching in educating and disciplining the Church.

*John Robinson, the Pilgrim pastor, seems to have discerned the range that a Divine revelation gives to the human mind as respects the matters mentioned above. In his parting charge to his flock, as reported by one who heard him, he said:

"He charged us, before God and his blessed angels, to follow him no further than he followed Christ; and, if God should reveal anything to us by any other instrument of His, to be as ready to receive it as ever we were to receive any truth by his ministry. For he was very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of His Holy Word." * * * "Here, also, he put us in mind of our Church covenant, or, at least, that part of it whereby we promise and covenant with God, and one with another, to receive whatever light or truth shall be made known to us from His Written Word. But, withal, he exhorted us to take heed what we received for truth, and well to examine and compare it, and weigh it with other Scripture of truth before we received it. For, saith he, it is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-Christian darkness and full perfection of knowledge break forth at once."

3. The general scarcity of books tended to the same end.
4. These two causes put the written standard of doctrine beyond popular reach.

5. The heretical challenge of the Scriptures stimulated the habit of appealing to the successions of the bishops.

Then certain great changes in the doctrine, organization, and spirit of the Church, contributed to the development of tradition. Three of these will now be stated at some length:

First: the ministry is no longer simply a teaching and ruling body; it has become a priesthood. Between a minister in the New Testament sense and a priest, the difference is very great. The latter, in the broadest sense, is a sacred person who is the custodian of Divine grace, and an intermediary between God and man. His great function is to offer sacrifice at the altar, to propitiate God by making an atonement for sin; he is the sole administrator of sacred rites. Such were the essential functions of the Jewish priesthood. The Christian minister is a very different sort of person. His office is to preach, to teach, and to rule. In no sense is he an intermediary, in no sense does he offer sacrifice or make an atonement, in no sense is he a priest. He is a preacher, and his Old Testament prototype is the prophet. Christ is the only priest known to Christianity. But it was not long until the New Testament idea began to give place to the Old Testament idea. This great change was accomplished through the imitation, conscious or unconscious, of the Jewish system. It was helped forward by the presence, within the confines of the Christian world, of the Pagan religions, each one of which had its sacerdotal system. But these two causes, in themselves, do not explain this great innovation in doctrine and in polity. The priestly system is much more favorable to ecclesiastical ambition than the ministerial. When you clothe a man

with sacerdotal powers, when you make him an almoner of Divine grace, when you constitute him a virtual official intercessor with God, when you make him the exclusive administrator of holy ordinances to which a sacramental efficacy is attributed,—you give him a far greater power over the souls and lives of men than he can ever wield so long as he is a simple teacher and ruler. But this was not all. Not only had the primitive ministry become a priesthood, but it had assumed a complete external organization. By the fifth century, a thoroughly organized hierarchy had arisen; deacons, priests, bishops, metropolitans, and patriarchs. A kingdom of the clergy had sprung up within the kingdom of Christ. The clerical body was separated from the laity. Many of the rites and functions that originally belonged to each member of the Church, as a king and a priest to God, had passed into the hands of the clergy. Many of the democratical features of the primitive Church had passed away; aristocratical features had taken their place, only to give way themselves, a little later, to those that were monarchical. When this great ecclesiastical innovation was fully accomplished, as it was not at the time to which the preceding sketch extends, on the one side of a clearly marked line stood the great, dumb laity; on the other, the hierarchy, almost omnipotent in the affairs of the Church, and often called the Church. When this change had fully taken place, the so-called Christian minister was more powerful than the Jewish priest had ever been, for he united to the teaching and ruling functions that properly belonged to him, the essential functions of the priest.

Second: the doctrines and ordinances of the Church have passed through analogous changes.

In great measure, the Levitical spirit dispossessed the spirit of the Gospel. The simple Apostolic ordinances be-

came mystical rites, invested with new names. Especially is this true of the Lord's Supper, which, from being a simple commemorative feast, became a mysterious sacrament, in which Christ himself is really present. A large number of commemorations, unknown to the New Testament and contrary to its spirit, were invented and established. To a great degree, the Christian principle of faith gave place to the sacerdotal principle of sacramental virtue. More and more room was found for the sacrificial principle. The faith once delivered to the saints thus received a strong Jewish coloring; and, what was more, was thrown into highly metaphysical forms. Besides, the simplicity of the original Christian worship was wholly lost sight of. An extensive ritual, composed partly of Jewish and partly of heathen elements, sprang up and overspread the Christian world. Liturgies were composed in every language spoken by the Church. On the whole, it is not too much to say, that the Levitical spirit took possession of the Christian body. These innovations in doctrine and in ritual gave new prominence and power to the clergy. The metaphysical theology called for a body of professionally trained teachers; and only a sacred order, with its own discipline and traditions, could officiate at the new altars, administer the sacramental ordinances, and unroll the panorama of the elaborate ritualistic service.

Third: with all the rest, the Church has become infallible.

This idea appears to have got afloat as early as the second century; at all events it became thoroughly established as early as the fourth. At first, it was the whole Christian body that was infallible, the Church, not a particular bishop. The Church was the channel of the Divine tradition; the Church, therefore, held the key of interpretation; hence, the Church was infallible. In the

Church was life, out of it death. All this was held of the visible Historical Church, existing in time. But there was a growing tendency to identify the clergy as the Church. They soon became the sole channels of Divine grace. Irenæus says tradition is in the Church, but when he speaks more narrowly he says it is handed down in the successions of the bishops. Cyprian says, "Where the Bishop is, there is the Church" (*Ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesia*), which came to be an accepted maxim. The doctrine of infallibility added immensely to the power of the hierarchy. Such questions as, Where is infallibility focalized? Who speaks the unerring voice? could not but arise. Nor could these questions be answered in more than one way. As the tradition was said to be handed down in the successions of the bishops, as was natural, since they were the most permanent order of the ministry, the heads of the churches; so the bishops were held to be the mouth-pieces of the Church. But to say that any one bishop was infallible, would have staggered the faith of antiquity. It was the collective body. Hence the Ecumenical Council was a necessity of the system; it was not only the most convenient, but it was the necessary, authority to declare tradition. Practically, therefore, the famous *concensus* or agreement of the Church was the *concensus* of the bishops; rather it was the *concensus* of so many of them as could be brought together, or could be induced to agree on certain definitions. That the bishops were the successors of the Apostles, was firmly held by Irenæus, and became a current article of faith.

Such are some of the innovations that, at the opening of the Middle Ages, floated on the stream of tradition. Others that have not been mentioned, are the primacy of Peter and the supremacy of the Roman See. It would be impossible minutely to give the chronological de-

velopment of these innovations. Nor is this necessary. This general account answers my purpose, for I wish only to show how the growth of tradition depended upon other growths.

Side by side these great innovations in the Church grew. They exerted a reciprocal influence, helping and helped; each one was a cause, and each one an effect. Together they constituted the material parts of the new doctrinal and ecclesiastical system; still tradition was the root of the others; rather the traditional habit of mind was the soil out of which they all grew. Tradition conditioned the others, and was conditioned by them. Whenever any innovation became sufficiently pronounced to attract general attention, its existence, taken in connection with the infallibility of the Church, furnished a presumption that it was a part of the tradition. No other invention could have been so favorable to priestly power and assumption, so unfavorable to the liberties of the laity. To a great degree, it put the sources of religious knowledge beyond the laity's reach. What could the latter know of an oral tradition handed down in the successions of the bishops, or scattered through the ever-increasing volume of ecclesiastical writings, except what the clergy chose to tell them? Had it been understood that the Gospel was found in certain writings few in number and small in volume, and had these writings been in the hands of all believers, then the means of checking the hierarchy would have been in the possession of the mass of Christians. But so long as the bishops said, "You are to pay heed to tradition, and this is handed down in our successions"—"Tradition is the key to Scripture," they wielded an almost irresistible power over the Church. A layman may fairly be asked to read a small volume, like the New Testament; but if the Bible is scattered through five thousand writings, as was the case

with the third Church Scripture, he is practically at the mercy of the ecclesiastical profession. Cyprian's "Where the Bishop is, there is the Church," is a just description of the ancient Church. Whenever a priest defends a tradition of which his profession are the custodians, he is defending the power of his own order. It is by making men believe that they stand very near to God—that they are the channels of holy oracles, the administrators of sacred rites—that priests in all ages gain power. As nothing else is so unfavorable to the rights and liberties of the laity as a human tradition, so nothing is so subversive of priestly power as an open Bible and the doctrine of private judgment. From the moment that the Reformation restored the Scriptures to the masses, and said "Read for yourselves," priestly power has been steadily waning.

Tradition must not be taken, then, as an isolated, unrelated fact, but must be considered in its historical connections. It was only one of the human inventions, though the most far-reaching, that changed the Apostolic Church into the Church of the Middle Ages.

Before passing to the Second Part, it will be well to review the ground passed over:

1. The Gospel was originally an oral testimony, delivered partly by Christ, and partly by the Apostles.

2. This original oral tradition was first supplemented by the Epistles, and then reduced to writing in the Gospels.

3. The stream of oral teaching continued to flow after the New Testament was written. The idea seems never to have taken possession of men's minds, that the oral Gospel was to cease, or that tradition was not to have weight in matters of religion. If it did, there is no distinct historical trace of the fact. If such was the understanding at any time, it must have been in the age of the Apostolic Fathers, or in the age of Justin, for their writings are the

only ancient Christian literature in which tradition, in some form, and for some purpose, is not plainly recognized.

4. Human tradition in the Church did not begin in outright manufacture, in the creation of an independent source of knowledge. It rather began in the corruption of the Divine oral tradition. It was through this gate that most, or all, of the more important innovations in the doctrine and organization of the Church came in.

5. For many centuries tradition was not considered a channel of information that conveyed doctrines not found in the Bible. It was held to contain the same doctrines.

6. It was often appealed to as a sufficient authority for rites and ceremonies.

7. It was also held to contain the key to Scripture.

8. Scripture was held to be perfect, sufficient, and supreme—the authoritative rule of faith.

9. At the same time, tradition waxed stronger and stronger, and threatened to undermine faith in the Scriptures as the only rule.

10. The progress of tradition was greatly hastened by the contemporaneous development of other abuses, such as the growth of the hierarchy, the spread within the Church of Jewish habits of thought, and the general reception of the idea of Church infallibility.

PART II.

THE PLACE OF TRADITION IN THE CHURCHES.

CHAPTER I.

TRADITION IN THE GREEK CHURCH.

There is a double reason why the Greek Church first claims our attention. Historically, it is the oldest of the great divisions of Christendom, and it still holds the doctrine of tradition substantially as it was held in the fifth or sixth century. However, we are so far removed from the Orient, and have been so little influenced historically by Oriental Christianity, that the Greek Church need not long detain us. Brief quotations from a few standard authorities will answer the present purpose.

The Orthodox Confession:

“The dogmas of the Church are double and of two kinds; those delivered to us in written form, which are contained in the Divine books of the Holy Scriptures, and those delivered by the Apostles by the living voice. These are the same that were afterwards more fully declared by the Councils and the Holy Fathers. On this double foundation our faith has been built.”

The Synod of Jerusalem, 1672, under the title “Shield of the Orthodox Faith:”

“The Church of the Orient has no other doctrine than God’s Word properly believed, and expounded piously by the holy Fathers; and the oral Traditions of the Apostles, preserved to our day by the Fathers.”

Judgment of the Oriental Church:

“We should hold fast to all that we have received from the Fathers as to things that are designed to promote our piety, and should not

let them fall into disuse; for he that despises the doctrine of the Fathers despises God. No man should despise, or account as of little consequence, what has come to us from the ancients, those holy men."

The Græco-Russian Confession of Faith, signed by the four Patriarchs of the Orient:

"An orthodox Christian must accept, and without any doubt, that all things of the Catholic faith and of the true Church have been transmitted by our Lord Jesus Christ, through his Apostles to the Church, which the holy General Councils have declared and accepted; and he must believe in these as the Apostle commands, when he says: 'Therefore brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.'—II Thess. ii: 15. And elsewhere: 'Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.'—I Cor. xi: 2. From these words it is clear that the articles of the faith have their confirmation and their certainty partly from the Holy Scriptures, partly from the traditions of the Church and the teachings of the councils of the Holy Fathers."

It will be seen from the foregoing, that the Greek Church holds firmly to tradition and to the authority of the Councils. The peculiar Roman doctrines of the Church and of the Pope, she rejects. She also gives much more room to the Scriptures, in her formularies, and makes much greater use of them in her services. Contrary to what might be expected, however, she has less life and mobility than the Latin Church of the West. But this is not the result of her laying less emphasis on tradition and more on Scripture; for centuries the Greek Church has lain in the midst of the mental stagnation prevailing in Western Asia and Southeastern Europe, while the Latin Church has been in immediate contact with the energizing mental life of Western Europe.

CHAPTER II.

TRADITION IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Already it has been stated that, as early as the third century, there was a marked difference between Eastern and Western tradition. Even in the days of Clement and Irenæus, the former was more ideal and plastic; the latter more realistic, hard, and inflexible. The forces that originally produced this difference continually tended to increase it. The principal causes that gave Western or Latin tradition its peculiar form were two in number: *First*, the hard, dry, conservative quality of the Latin mind, constantly seen in its history. The Roman mind was unwilling to surrender an old tradition, and equally unwilling to understand anything in other than a hard, literal sense. *Second*, the ambition of the Latin Church, culminating in the Pope. The Ultramontane papacy is built upon an immense basework of traditions. Hence it is, that no other Christian communion holds the doctrine of tradition in so extreme and rigid a form. How she holds the doctrine, I now undertake to show.

The ancient Church poured its flood of human traditions into the mediæval; the mediæval again discharged it, greatly augmented, into the modern Latin Church. The papacy floated upon the swelling stream. Still, at the opening of the Protestant era, the doctrine of tradition

had never been formulated, and had no dogmatic shape. This work was performed by that famous Council which put in their places and groined together the various parts of the theological and ecclesiastical system, the forging of which had occupied ten centuries. The Council of Trent's decree on tradition is all the more significant when considered in its historical connection. Luther attacked, not only many of the traditions of Rome, but her doctrine of tradition as well. He declared that men must return to the Bible, if they would understand Christianity. It has been said that the Reformation raised the question whether the Bible or the Church should be the supreme religious authority. At that time the Bible was almost a lost book; and the Reformation has the imperishable honor of having restored it to the Western world, and given it general currency. For the time being, the Protestant onset threatened to sweep everything before it. Luther appealed to a General Council, which Rome did not dare convoke. It was not until the consternation produced by the great movement had partially subsided, and the Jesuits had begun the reorganization of the Papal forces on a new system, that one was called. When the bishops came together at Trent, in 1545, they composed a council very different from the one that Luther had so often demanded. The work it took in hand was not to reform doctrine and to cleanse the Church, but to put the existing Roman system in the best shape for defence. For centuries men had sleepily rested on tradition, but without defining its place in theology. But now that the Reformers affirmed the sufficiency of Scripture and repudiated tradition, Rome was compelled to speak out. It has been said that, at Trent, there were as many opinions respecting tradition as there were tongues. Some affirmed that the Bible itself rested on tradition. Some argued

that the Church should be treated of before Scripture, since the latter rested on the former. Others recoiled from these propositions, and argued that it was best to leave the matter where the Fathers had left it. But it did not and could not long remain doubtful what was the temper of the Council. Roman Catholicism could not now deny its own paternity. Hence, when the Council found its voice, which it did in the fourth session, it declared the following to be the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition:

“The sacred, holy, ecumenical and general Council of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Spirit, the three before-mentioned legates of the Apostolic See presiding therein; having constantly in view the removal of error and the preservation of the purity of the Gospel in the Church, which Gospel, promised before by the prophets in the Sacred Scriptures, was first orally published by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who afterwards commanded it to be preached by his Apostles to every creature, as the source of all-saving truth and discipline; and perceiving that this truth and discipline are contained both in written books and in unwritten traditions which have come down to us, either received by the Apostles from the lips of Christ himself, or transmitted by the hands of the same Apostles, under the dictation of the Holy Spirit; following the example of the orthodox Fathers, doth receive and reverence, with equal piety and veneration, all the books, as well of the Old as of the New Testament, the same God being the author of both, and also the aforesaid traditions, pertaining both to faith and manners, whether received from Christ himself, or dictated by the Holy Spirit, and preserved in the Catholic Church by continual succession.”

Such was the reply of the Roman Church to Protestantism. So far from the Protestant challenge effecting a softening of the doctrine, it rather caused its crystallization in its worst form. Let it be noted on what ground the Roman traditions are placed: they are “received from Christ himself,” or “dictated by the Holy Spirit.” Upon this point Catholic writers are very explicit. Cardinal Wiseman asks: “What then, my brethren, is the rule of faith which our Church admits?” and answers: “The Word of God, the Word of God alone and exclusively; but here comes in the great trenching difference between our-

selves and others in the inquiry, what is the extent of God's Holy Word?" He then proceeds to expound the doctrine of the unwritten Word, its origin and its permanent authority, concluding as follows:

"By the *unwritten* Word of God, we mean a body of doctrines, which, in consequence of express declarations in the *written* Word, we believe not to have been committed in the first instance to writing, but delivered by Christ to his Apostles, and by the Apostles to their successors. We believe that no new doctrine can be introduced into the Church, but that every doctrine which we hold, has existed, and been taught in it ever since the time of the Apostles; having been handed down by them to their successors under the only guarantee on which we receive doctrines from the Church, that is, Christ's promises to abide with it forever, to assist, direct, and instruct it, and always teach in and through it. So that, while giving our implicit credit, and trusting our judgment to it, we are believing, and trusting to the express teaching and sanction of Christ himself. *Tradition*, therefore, my brethren, or the doctrines delivered down, and the *unwritten Word* of God, are one and the same thing."*

The Creed of Pope Pius IV., a pretended summary of the decrees of Trent, contains the following: "I most fully admit and embrace Apostolical and ecclesiastical traditions, and all other constitutions and observances of the same Church." The pious Moehler defined tradition, in the subjective sense of the word, to be "the ecclesiastical consciousness," "the peculiar Christian sense existing in the Church, and transmitted by ecclesiastical education." In the objective sense, he called it "the general faith of the Church through all ages, manifested by outward historical testimonies."†

Affirmatively, then, the Roman Catholic Church holds that the Word of God is two-fold—written and unwritten—Scripture and tradition; that these are the complements of each other, and of equal authority. Negatively, she denies both the perspicuity and sufficiency of Scrip-

**Doctrines of the Church*, I., p. 63.

†*Symbolism*, New York, pp. 273-4.

ture. However, this doctrine can never be understood separate and apart from her doctrine of the Church.

That the Church traditions do not float in the air, that they are not now handed down in an oral form, has been shown in a previous chapter. In the words of Cardinal Wiseman:

“But it must not be thought that Catholics conceive there is a certain mass of vague and floating opinions, which may, at the option of the Pope, or of a General Council, or of the whole Church, be turned into articles of faith. Neither is it implied by the term *unwritten Word*, that these articles of faith or traditions are nowhere recorded.”*

The traditions are scattered through the writings of Fathers, the edicts of Popes, the decisions of Councils. More than a thousand years must be ranged over to find all the leaves of the third Bible. The learned and tireless Ussher was occupied more than eighteen years in reading the Fathers of the first six centuries, although he read a portion of them every day. The inquiry, How shall the sense of tradition be gathered? is, therefore, a portentous one. It becomes even more portentous, when the additional fact is stated that, on many points, the Fathers are irreconcilably contradictory. The great name of Chillingworth authenticates the statement: “There are Fathers against Fathers, and Fathers against themselves; a consent of Fathers of one age against a consent of Fathers of another age.” What spirit is to move upon the face of this formless deep? What power is to bring order out of this confusion? Here we meet the logical necessity, in a Roman point of view, of an infallible Church; the interior reason why the doctrine of the Church grew, *pari passu*, with the doctrine of tradition. The more Christians believed in a traditional Gospel, the more they felt the need of an authoritative body that should declare that Gospel. By the exercise of private judgment, a man could make out

**Doctrines of the Church*, I., p. 63.

the leading doctrines of the New Testament; but to gather "the peculiar Christian sense existing in the Church" from the swollen stream of ecclesiastical literature, was an impossibility. Hence the catholic mind of antiquity, out of the declaration that the gates of Hell should not prevail against the Church, and the promise that Christ would be with his disciples to the end of the world, constructed the doctrine of infallibility. Not that the infallible Church was the sole product of logical forces working from within; perhaps it was even more largely the result of practical forces working from without; but we must not overlook the tendency of the ecclesiastical logic, least of all the logical necessity for some organ for tradition. Of what use is an inspired tradition, unless it flows through an inspired channel? But it was not enough to call the Church infallible, and the mouthpiece of tradition; since that left unanswered, the question, How is the Church to act? Men could not help asking, "Who utters the infallible voice?" and "How are we to identify the infallible deliverances?" It was idle to recite St. Vincent's formula, "Believe what has been received always, everywhere, and by everybody;" for this only turned the inquirer back to roam once more the wide field of antiquity. That the light of the Church should somewhere be focalized, was both a logical and a practical necessity. For many centuries the General Council, composed of the bishops, in whose successions the traditions were said to be handed down, was the organ of Church infallibility. By and by, when the power of the Pope had greatly increased, it was asserted, in his interest, that he had some important functions to perform in declaring the faith. At first, however, these functions were subordinate to the functions of the council; the Pope must call the council, preside over its deliberations in person or by legate, and, perhaps, sanction

its decrees. Even this much interference with the rights and duties of the representative body of the whole Church, was resented by the more independent bishops. Some of the councils spoke out very plainly on this point. That of Basle declared: "None of the skillful did ever doubt of this truth, that the Pope, in things belonging to faith, was subject to the judgment of the same General Councils—that the Council has an authority immediately from Christ, which the Pope is bound to obey." This view was strongly opposed by the champions of papal authority. Baronius proclaimed it an absurd and unreasonable opinion of Hincmar's, "that the canons of councils were of greater authority in the Church of God than the decrees of Popes." Perhaps it is needless to remark, that this view was very distasteful to the Popes themselves. At the commencement of the modern era, the relations of the Pope to the council had not been dogmatically determined: practically, however, the two united in defining faith and morals, the Pope rather as an adjunct to the council. Says Dr. Barrow: "This is a question stiffly debated among Romanists: but the most, as Æneas Sylvius, afterward Pope Pius II., did acutely observe, with good reason do adhere to the Pope's side, because the Pope disposeth of benefices, but councils give none."* Nor has this point been definitely determined to this day. The council of the Vatican, in 1870, declared it to be a dogma divinely revealed:

"That the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the Divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church."

* *Barrow's Works*, Edinburgh, 1841: III., p. 187.

In its essential features, this decree completed that hierarchical edifice, the first faint outlines of which are found in the so-called "Ignatian Epistles." But how does this decree affect the doctrine of tradition?

Before the last council sat, the Catholic method of settling the faith, if we can safely follow Cardinal Wiseman, was as follows:

"Suppose a difficulty to arise regarding any doctrine—so that men should differ, and not know what precisely to believe, and that the Church thought it prudent or necessary to define what is to be held; the method pursued would be to examine most accurately the writings of the Fathers of the Church, to ascertain what, in different countries and in different ages, was by them held; and then, collecting the suffrages of all the world and of all times—not indeed to create a new Article of Faith—but to define what has always been the Faith of the Catholic Church. It is conducted, in every instance, as a matter of historical inquiry, and all human prudence is used to arrive at a judicious decision. But when the Church is assembled for this solemn purpose, in consequence of those promises of Christ, which I shall develop at full length hereafter, we believe it impossible that the decrees which she issues can be false or incorrect, because Christ's promises would fail and be made void, should the Church be allowed to fall into error."*

It will be observed that, according to this view, the council was to proceed as with "a matter of historical inquiry," using "all human prudence" to arrive at a judicious result, and that then the Divine assistance would be enjoyed. But since the Vatican decree, these requisites are not necessary, unless in the case of the Pope. Precisely how the decree affects him, we are left to conjecture. Must he proceed by the method of historical inquiry and human prudence? or does he have the Divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, without taking such precautions? Pope Innocent X. could be quoted in favor of the latter view. This Pontiff said "the vicar of Jesus Christ was not obliged to examine all things by dispute;

* *Doctrines of the Church*, I., p. 63.

for that the truth of his decrees depended only on Divine inspiration," in which case, to quote the words of Dr. Barrow, "he pronounces only by miracle, as Balaam's ass."* Ebermann, one of the Jesuit theologians, has said: "A thoroughly ignorant Pope may very well be infallible; for God has before now pointed out the right road by the mouth of a speaking ass." Probably most Catholic theologians are not prepared to go to this length, but Innocent X. and Ebermann clearly have the reason of the system on their side. If the Divine assistance extended to a Pope depend on his "prudence" and use of "historical inquiry," then it depends on the degree to which he asserts these qualities. It depends, too, on the vigor of his intellectual faculties, and the extent of his theological learning. To affirm such propositions as these, logically involves degrees of Divine inspiration, and cuts up the whole theory by the roots. Still, Dr. Edward McGlynn, of St. Stephen's Church, New York, who is not one of the Catholic extremists, says: "It is no part of Catholic faith, it is no teaching of Catholic theology, that the Pope, in preaching a sermon or writing a theological work, may not commit theological blunders, or, for that matter, through ignorance or inadvertence, teach heresy, which he himself, upon his attention being called to it by a better theologian or a more learned private doctor, might, by virtue of his Apostolic office, be called upon to condemn."† But this attempt to clear the subject of its difficulties involves us in greater ones. The question arises, whether Pope Innocent was infallible when he uttered the words quoted above. Did he speak "by virtue of the Apostolic office," or as "a private doctor?" It will be observed that the

**Works*, III., p. 186.

† See an article contributed to the "American Catholic Quarterly Review," "The Bugbear of Vaticanism."

Ultramontane logic here runs in a circle. The Church is to listen to the Pope, when he speaks from the chair infallibly; he speaks from the chair infallibly, when he teaches the Universal Church! Here is one of the great defects of the Roman system as it was left by the Vatican Council. There are no *indices*, or only very indefinite ones, by which to determine what utterances of the Pope are addressed to the Universal Church, and what are not. How shall we be infallibly certain when the Pope speaks infallibly? Not until this defect is supplied will the Roman system stand forth logically complete, wanting nothing.

There are, then, still some open questions in Catholic theology. In addition to those stated above, this one may be mentioned: Is the General Council to be dispensed with in the future? If the Pope is infallible, there seems to be no longer a theoretical necessity for the Council. What need of calling together several hundred men from all parts of the world, if one alone can infallibly declare the truth? It is not probable that the Church will be in haste to answer. She can hardly be said ever to be in haste; she takes her time. Her policy is to leave large questions open, especially when nothing can be gained by answering them. Her last step—that of declaring the Pope infallible—is really contrary to her traditional policy, for it closes a question that had been open for centuries, and that pressed for an answer no more at one time than at another. The truth is, the Roman *Curia*, in this matter, overreached itself. Not content with the substance of power, it must have the shadow.

Another open question is the relation of the doctrine of tradition to the doctrine of the Church. In a previous chapter I have pointed out this relation in the Church of antiquity; the claim of authority grew out of the claim of

tradition. But while it is easy to see that such is the original relation of these two ideas—that one is root, the other stalk—a single glance will show that considerable care is necessary in their statement to keep them from conflicting. It has even been asserted that they necessarily antagonize. Dr. Hodge, for example, says: “Romanists admit that tradition would not be a trustworthy informant of what Christ and the Apostles taught, without the supernatural intervention of God. Tradition is to be trusted, not because it comes down through the hands of fallible men, but because it comes through an infallibly guided Church.” The Doctor continues: “This, however, is giving up the question. It is merging the authority of tradition into the authority of the Church. There is no need of the former, if the latter be admitted.”* It cannot be denied that there is a tendency so to enlarge the sphere of authority as to bring it into collision with tradition. But this is not necessary. If it be understood that the Church does not originate doctrines, that her inspiration goes no further than the delivery of doctrines long ago entrusted to her, then the two do not antagonize. True, it may be said: “If an infallible Church is necessary, why not make it her function to originate doctrine as it is needed? Why confine her to the humbler office of transmitting what she has received? Why a tradition at all? and why not a continuous inspiration?” The only reply is this: “These questions pertain to the wisdom of the Divine arrangements; it is enough to know that God has not so done.” Nor are we at liberty to deny the sufficiency of the answer. Now, the Catholic Church sometimes holds up an infallible Apostolical tradition, to be ascertained by historical inquiry and human prudence, assisted by the Spirit of God; again she holds up the authority of an inspired Church.

* *Systematic Theology*, I., pp. 121-2.

Her utterances cannot be reconciled. The decrees of Trent and the Creed of Pius IV. do not speak the same language. The decrees put the unwritten traditions, "whether received from Christ himself or dictated by the Holy Spirit," on an equality with the Bible. The Creed requires the acceptance, not only of the "Apostolical and ecclesiastical traditions," but also "*all other constitutions and observances of the same Church.*" No other reason for this vacillation can be given than the determination to keep an open door for further innovations. The doctrine of an inspired Church is much more favorable to such innovations in the old discipline than the doctrine of an Apostolic tradition. While the Latin Church has professed for the last fifteen hundred years to stand on antiquity, she has really been changing her ground all the time. Nor is she likely to shut herself up either to tradition or to authority, in the near future. Still there has been a growing tendency to emphasize authority. Faithfully carried out, the doctrine of tradition would require a constant examination of the old foundations—the constant use of historical inquiry and human prudence; but as a matter of fact, articles of faith have not been thus formulated; they have been rested immediately on authority. The Tridentine decrees were not verified by the Scriptures or by the Fathers, but were grounded on the "sacred, holy, ecumenical, and general council." The Vatican decree concerning infallibility refers to the ancient tradition, but finds its strongest assurance of that infallibility in the Divine assistance promised in blessed Peter, that is, in the Pope's inspiration. Here a new element rises to the surface—the independent authority of the Pope. His *ex-cathedra* utterances are said to be "irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church." The effect of this is to give him a *locus* independent of the

consensus of the Church. The result is still further to complicate Catholic theology. If it was a delicate task before so to state the doctrine of authority that it should not conflict with tradition, much more is it so now. Indeed, to harmonize an Apostolical tradition, an infallible Church, and an inspired Pope, may fairly be pronounced an impossibility.

Some of the peculiar features of the Roman Catholic Church find their explanation in her doctrine of tradition. One of these is her method of evangelization. What this is, can best be shown by contrasting it with the Protestant method. The Protestant seeks to convert men by inducing them to study the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, by getting their minds to act freely upon the Scriptures, by instilling into them the Word of God. This may not in all cases be the Protestant theory of conversion, but it is the Protestant practice. Accordingly, in all enlightened countries the Scriptures are scattered in widest profusion; while for those savage nations which have only oral languages, alphabets are invented, barbarous dialects are reduced to writing, and the Bible is then translated into them. The missionary also preaches the Gospel orally, referring to the written Word of God as authority for what he preaches. The Roman Church says this is all wrong; her principle is, *the Church teaching by authority*. In working it, the priest teaches the infidel a few dogmas orally, and authenticates his teaching by referring to the Church. Cardinal Wiseman declares, "that all men may be admitted at once into the Catholic religion, who give up belief in their own individual judgment, and adopt the principle that whatever the Catholic Church shall teach them must be true."*

* *Doctrines of the Church*, I., p. 119.

No place is found for the Bible until the work of conversion is completed. The Cardinal says again: "Surely the Sacred Volume was never intended, and was not adopted, to *teach* us our creed; however certain it is that we can *prove* our creed from it, when it has once been taught us, and in spite of individual producible exceptions to the general rule. From the very first, the rule has been, as a matter of fact, for the Church to teach the truth, and then appeal to the Scripture in vindication of its own teaching."* Dr. J. H. Newman says it is a proposition, "self-evident as soon as stated, to those who have at all examined the structure of Scripture, *namely*, that the sacred text was never intended to teach doctrine, but only to prove it, and that, if we would learn doctrine, we must have recourse to the formularies of the Church; for instance, to the Catechism and to the Creeds."† The meaning of this is, however intelligent, studious, and reverent men may be, they cannot, from the Bible alone, find the way of life. Hence the affirmation of "the insufficiency of the mere private study of Holy Scripture for arriving at the entire truth which it really contains." Whoever would see this Roman method of evangelization in operation on a large scale should read the life of Xavier, the Apostle of India. It is asserted that he, "like the Apostles, converted and baptized his thousands in one day, who remained steadfast in the faith and law of Christ." What Xavier really did, was to receive the assent of these heathen to a few dogmas that they did not understand, to receive their submission to the Church, to baptize them, and then to leave them, as unconverted in heart and life as they were before.

Another of the peculiar features of the Roman system,

* *Doctrines of the Church*, I., p. 124.

† *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, pp. 60-61.

growing out of the doctrine of tradition, is the small use that the Church has for the Bible in training the believer. The Council of Trent practically forbade the exercise of private judgment, by denying a man's right to find in Scripture a sense contrary to that held by Holy Mother Church. It also threw great difficulties in the way of printing and circulating the sacred writings.*

* "Chemintz says Eckius, Emser, and the first writers against the Reformation, did not refuse to argue from Scripture; but Pighius, finding this detrimental to his cause, invented the method of arguing on the insufficiency, obscurity, and ambiguity of Scripture, and the necessity of unwritten tradition, in which he was followed by all the Roman theologians."—Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, I., p. 28, *Note*.

Certain it is that from the time of the Protestant defection, for whatever reason, new prominence was given to tradition, and far more was said about the insufficiency of Scripture than had ever been said before. Cardinal Wiseman confesses that there was a change of tactics. These are his words: "The Scriptures had been diffused among the faithful, and would have so continued, had not dangerous doctrines sprung up, which taught that men should throw aside all authority, and each one judge for himself in religion; a system which we have seen fraught with such dreadful difficulties, that it is no wonder that it should have been made a matter of discipline to check, for a time, its perilous diffusion."—*Doctrines of the Church*, I. p. 57.

However it may have been on the Continent, the Bible seems to have had free course in England, until the troubles growing out of the Lollard movement led both State and Church to interfere with its circulation. See Blunt's "Plain Account of the English Bible," London, 1870, pp. 26-30; also Westcott's "History of the English Bible," London, 1868, pp. 13-26. Cranmer, writing in 1540, says: "For it is not much above one hundred years ago since Scripture hath not been accustomed to be read in the vulgar tongue within this realm."

But as intelligence began to quicken at the dawn of the modern era, it became apparent both to the princes of the Church and the princes of the State, that the free circulation of the Bible would lead men to challenge venerable traditions, both political and ecclesiastical. State and Church therefore formed an unholy alliance to keep it out of the way of the common people. The Church did not particularly object to the Bible so long as it was little read, and the traditional interpretation implicitly received. Since the battle between the Bible and tradition was joined, she does object, unless a priest stands by to enforce with authority the ecclesiastical sense. Its diffusion is considered "perilous."

Cardinal Wiseman says: "We give not the word of God indiscriminately to all, because God himself has not so given it. We do not permit the indiscriminate and undirected use of the Bible, because God has not given to His Church the instinct to do so." The Protestant makes the Bible the foundation of the Church. But it has been well said: "In Catholic doctrine, the Bible holds no such fundamental place. The Bible is an institution within that Church, not a foundation under it. The Church is divinely founded and perpetually inspired. It makes no pretense of resting upon the Bible. The Bible is a kind of history which the Church has made of itself, and the Church alone is competent to say what the history means, is sole sovereign, so to say, over its contents."* The Protestant problem is this: Given the Bible to find the Church; the Catholic problem this: Given the Church to find the Bible. Catholic doctrines have small confidence in the mental stability of men. Gregory XII. declared: "It is well pleasing to Almighty God, that his sacred worship should be performed in an unknown tongue, in order that the whole world, and especially the most simple, may not be able to understand it." Gregory the Great said, "Ignorance is the mother of devotion." Great are the fears that, if the individual soul is shut up to the Bible, it will go wrong. Protestants are accustomed to say that the reason why Rome lays so little stress on the Bible, is that the Bible condemns her peculiar practices. All that I am particular to point out is this, her neglect of Scripture springs naturally from the genius of her system. To put tradition on a level with Scripture, and to teach that the Church is inspired, necessarily throws the Bible into the background. It is always easier to go to an inspired teacher for truth, than it is to

* *The Methodist*, Nov. 20, 1875.

find it for yourself. What need, therefore, of sending men to the two Testaments, so long as the Church teaches with authority?*

It is claimed for the Roman method of teaching religion,

* The attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to the Bible, was once summed up by Dr. Philip Schaff, in the following calm and able manner, in a communication to the *Independent*:

The charge is often brought against the Roman Catholic Church that she is hostile to the Holy Scriptures and would destroy them, if she could. In this unqualified form the charge is a slander; if confined to Protestant Bibles, it is true.

The Roman Catholic Church has never opposed the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures; but declared them to be divinely inspired, and, together with the traditions of an infallible Church culminating in an infallible Pope, the supreme rule in all matters of faith and morals. From this position she can never recede without giving up her claim to infallibility—i. e., giving up herself. She has, moreover, never opposed the Latin Vulgate of Jerome; but raised it to an undeserved equality with the original Scriptures. She allows, also, but does not encourage, the circulation of those vernacular translations which she herself approves as correct. Such translations exist in all the modern languages of Europe, and can be freely bought in any respectable Catholic bookstore. But the position of the Roman Catholic Church in regard to the indiscriminate circulation of the Bible, in any form, and as regards all Protestant versions, is very different. The facts in the case may be reduced to the following points:

1. Several Popes before and even after the Reformation, especially Innocent III. (ob. 1216) and Clement XI., in the Bulla *Unigenitus* (1713), have not, indeed, absolutely prohibited, but, at least, restricted and discouraged the reading of the Bible in the vernacular tongues.

2. Pius VII. (1816), Leo XII. (1824), Gregory XVI. (1832), and Pius IX., have anathematized the Protestant Bible societies and denounced the spread of Protestant Bibles. The Papal Syllabus of 1864 (iv.) classes Bible societies (*Societates Biblicæ*) with socialism, communism, secret societies, and calls them "pests," which had often been most severely reprobated in papal encyclicals.

3. The "*Index Librorum Prohibitorum*," as issued by Pius IV., allows the use of the (Catholic) translations only on condition of a special permission of the priest.

4. It is perfectly consistent with the Romish view on the obscurity of the Scriptures, as well as with the hierarchical spirit, to place very little value on the reading of the Bible, and to refer the laity to the living teaching of the priesthood. The reading of the Bible is not regarded as necessary by the Roman Church; but only as useful within certain limits, and as positively hurtful if left free to all.

5. The wholesale destruction of Protestant translations of the Bible was an essential and prominent part of the Jesuitical counter-reformation in Bohemia, Poland, Hungary, and other countries. Bohemian and Polish Bibles were burned by the thousands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so that copies were very rare. One Jesuit (Koniash, died about 1617) boasted that he had burned over 60,000 Bohemian books. The whole Czech and Polish literature was destroyed by the Jesuits.

that it is the method of the Apostles, that it is the one used in the great national conversions from the fifth century onward, and that in recent times it has been far more successful than the Protestant method. Concerning the last claim, it may be said, the success of Roman missions is far more apparent than real. Rome has rather lowered Christianity to the barbarian's level, than lifted him to its level. She has been much more successful in instilling into him the authority of the Church, than the teaching of the Gospel. It must be admitted that the second claim is, in great degree, true. In the time of the national conversions, men and nations came into the Church first, and wore out their heathenism afterwards. This fact goes very far towards accounting for that barbarizing of the Church which is so conspicuous a feature of the Middle Ages. Once more, the Apostles did use an oral method; they also appealed to authority. Not, however, to the authority of the Church, but to the authority of God. They also constantly employed such Scriptures as had then been written. And then it may be asked, was the oral character of the primitive tradition an essential characteristic, or only an accidental feature? For the present, the answer to this question is postponed.

Two other peculiarities of the Roman system may be explained in the same way: the acceptance of the Hebrew Apocrypha as canonical, and the substitution of the Vulgate version for the Hebrew and Greek originals. The Apocrypha was received by the Council of Trent, apparently because it was found in the Vulgate. Jerome, the original author of that version, did not put the Apocryphal books on a level with the other books. Probably the prevailing ignorance of Hebrew and Greek, on the part of the clergy, had much to do with the substitution of the Vulgate in place of the originals. It was also argued,

that, in the midst of so many varying versions, there was need of some one authoritative standard. The fact that the Vulgate had been long used in the Church, that it had become a part of the Church tradition, was undoubtedly a principal reason for making it the standard authority.

The Catholic method of authenticating Scripture springs from the same root, but the discussion of this topic is reserved for another place.

NOTE.

THE INFALLIBILITY DOGMA.

The evolution of this dogma is one of the most interesting questions in ecclesiastical history. No man can compass it without a penetrating insight into human nature, and a vast knowledge of secular and religious history from the time of the Apostles to the present day. To hear one-half or more of the Christian world calling a foolish old priest infallible, is, from one point of view, astounding; but when we follow, historically, the long path that led the Catholic world to the Vatican Basilica in 1869, wonder vanishes, if not surprise. In an article entitled, "The Logic of Roman Catholicism," contributed to the "Christian Quarterly," Vol. VII., the author attempted a summary view of this difficult subject. This view, somewhat reduced, is here presented:

1. The Church, as an historical body, held itself infallible in faith and morals. This idea, in a mild form, got afloat in the second century, and, long before the Council of Nice sat, it was generally received. Nor can it be claimed that the doctrine of an infallible Church makes as large a demand on credulity as the doctrine of an infallible Pope. Great bodies have a steadiness that does not belong to single individuals. "Bobus" Smith wittily said, "The House of Commons knows more than any man in it." And we can see how a vast community, like the Church, might hold on the even

tenor of its way, holding in its embrace the primitive doctrine, when single persons, and even groups of persons, lapsed from the truth. Nor were the roots of this doctrine altogether in the air; the Church teachers claimed that they were firmly planted in the Scriptures. No Protestant believes that Christ taught the inspiration of the Church, or that the decisions of the Church should be as inflexible as those of God. Rightly interpreted, the so-called infallibility passages do not teach infallibility. At the same time, however, we can readily understand how infallibility was found in them. The Church was becoming a great communion, affording an ample field for clerical ambition; the times were stormy, almost forcing upon the Church a stronger organization, certainly making an excuse for it; constant attacks from without called for unity within, and engendered the pretense of unity when it did not exist; the Church became more and more assimilated to the State, and finally entered into close alliance with it. An assumed uniformity of teaching seemed to the great ecclesiastics a sort of logical necessity; while the widening historical back-ground, for the Church now began to have an antiquity, furnished an object for superstitious affection. What wonder, therefore, that this growing power, in an age of gathering darkness, came to believe that it was infallible?

2. It was believed that infallibility must be sought in the *consensus* of the Church. This was the only natural view to take of the matter. Individual teachers might err, and whole communities might fall into heresy; but what the Church Universal taught and practiced could not be false. To get at infallibility, it did not suffice to scan a narrow field, or to consider only a moment of time, to follow this or that teacher, or to listen to the cry loudest

at the moment—you must get the *consensus* of the Church, the general consent both of the present and the past.

3. The *consensus* of the Church must in some way voice itself; infallibility must have an organ of expression and communication. Of what service would it be floating in the air? Who could utilize it so long as it reposed in a thousand writings, or was voiced by ten thousand pulpits? Besides, who could undertake the labor, and who could risk the uncertainty, of gathering the *consensus* from so many oracles? We cannot see unless the rays of light are focalized; and unless the teaching of the Church could somewhere be authoritatively stated, the Church might as well not be infallible. The want of an organ must have been generally felt; rather it would have been, if it had not been provided so soon as it was called for. Side by side with the expansion of the Church had been the expansion of the teaching and ruling body. By the opening of the third century, there was a hierarchy. Bishops and presbyters had become separate orders. The abler and more aspiring of the presbyters had partly clutched, and had partly thrust upon them, episcopal rank and powers; they were now pastors of pastors; they were accounted successors of the Apostles; they were the men who had the widest knowledge of the doctrine and traditions of the Church. How natural it was, therefore, that the bishops collectively should be regarded the mouth-piece of the inspired society; and, as the bishops spoke collectively only in the Ecumenical Council, that convocation was the focal point of infallibility.

4. The Bishop of Rome came to be an adjunct of the Council in making known the *consensus* of the Church. How this came about, must be briefly traced. Purely human causes gave the Bishop of the Imperial City preëminence over his episcopal brethren. He was first

among equals (*primus inter pares*); then he denied that he had any equals and asserted that he was a universal monarch. While he was mounting upward, the idea of the primacy was invented in his interest. Theologians read in their Testaments: "On this rock [held to be Peter] will I build my Church" (Matt. xvi: 18): "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs." (John xxi: 15); and on the pretended authority of these texts, and one or two others like them, Peter was declared Prince of the Apostles, and Head of the Church, while the doctrine of the episcopal succession was so expanded as to make the Bishop of Rome Peter's successor. Other bishops could claim no more than a general succession; the Roman Bishop's succession was particular. Circumstances favored the Roman See more and more. The Church was sweeping out into the darkness and the wildness of the Middle Ages, and the ecclesiastical politicians who directed her fortunes thought an absolute will was essential to discipline. We see clearly that there is no Pope in the above texts; but we see also that, since the doctrines of tradition, of Church infallibility, and of Apostolical succession had become established, and since the Roman Bishop had become the head of the hierarchy, the Roman interpretation was not unnatural.

The idea of an infallible church is older by many centuries than the idea of an infallible Pope. The Church believed herself inerrant long before she bowed her neck to the Roman Bishop. At first no one thought him infallible, or considered him a necessary adjunct of the Council; even after he had become the head of the hierarchy, no one considered him a necessary factor in defining dogmas of faith; he did not call the earliest councils, nor

preside over them in person or by legate; he was always listened to with respect, as a powerful ecclesiastic, but his word was not a finality; hence his approval of conciliar decrees was thought desirable, but not necessary. But as time wore on, as the Roman Bishop grew in power, as the East separated from the West, leaving the Western pontiff more absolute than ever on his own side of the dividing line, the Pope began to play a very important, and even controlling, part in the affairs of councils. Now, he must convoke, or unite with the Emperor in convoking, them. The presidency belonged to him. The decrees were not thought binding unless he approved them. As it would be contrary to the genius of the Roman race, and to the doctrine of tradition, to do what had never been done, the fiction was invented that the Popes had always exercised these powers; it followed that the *consensus* of the Church was mute without the Pope's coöperation in voicing it. Still he was not held to be personally infallible, until another step had been taken.

5. The one remaining step was taken when the Vatican Council, July 18, 1870, with the approval of the Pope, proclaimed the Pope infallible.

This proclamation calls for two remarks: first, it was made by a council called in the usual way, and proceeding according to the usual forms. The Old Catholics deny this, declaring that the Vatican Council is no council; but no good reason can be given why a man who was a loyal Catholic up to the sitting of this Council, should afterward turn back, unless prepared to retrace his steps many hundred years; for, second, this definition is the culmination of a series of events that began in the second century. It is the legitimate and inevitable conclusion of the Catholic logic. It is true enough, as Old Catholics charge, that the Pope dictated to the

Council, but the Catholic logic put him in a position where he could thus dictate. As we have seen, it belonged to the Pope to convoke councils and to approve their decrees. Hence, when a council thus convoked declares the Pope infallible, and the Pope approves the decree, the two thus uniting in declaring that papal infallibility is contained in the *consensus* of the Church, what logical ground is there for resistance, unless the whole system of Popes and Councils is swept away, and Church infallibility denied?

I may add, the logical weakness of the Old Catholic movement is one great cause of its want of success thus far.

CHAPTER III.

TRADITION IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.

The Anglican Church holds the doctrine of tradition in a way that admirably harmonizes with her whole system, both doctrinal and ecclesiastical; nothing extreme, but the *via media*. In the "Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity," the learned and judicious Hooker argues that Catholics and Puritans were equally at fault on this subject. He says: "Whatsoever to make up the doctrine of man's salvation is added, as in supply of the Scripture's insufficiency, we reject it. Scripture purposing this, hath perfectly and fully done it." That is, Hooker pronounces against the Catholic doctrine that tradition contains Divine knowledge essential to salvation, that is not found in Scripture. He now turns to the Puritans, arguing, against them, that the Church has authority in rites and ceremonies, or in matters that are indifferent to salvation. He charges them with "racking and stretching" Holy Scripture when they hold that all rites and ceremonies used in worship must be found therein. He says: "As incredible praises given unto men do often abate and impair the credit of their deserved commendation; so we must likewise take great heed, lest in attributing unto Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which indeed it hath most

abundantly to be less reverently esteemed.”* According to Hooker, while Catholics make too little, pronounced Protestants make too much, of the Bible. In this he is perfectly true to the spirit of the Establishment, as I hasten to show.

The material part of the sixth Article of the English Church is in these words:

“Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”

The twentieth Article runs thus:

“The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God’s word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree anything against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation.”

Article thirty-four is in part as follows:

“It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men’s manners, so that nothing be ordained against God’s Word. * * * Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, ceremonies or rites of the Church, ordained only by man’s authority, so that all things be done to edifying.”

One of the canons passed by the Convocation of 1571, the convocation that put the Articles in their present form, contains this clause:

“In the first place, let preachers take heed that they deliver nothing from the pulpit to be religiously held and believed by the people, but that which is agreeable to the Old and New Testament, and such as the catholic Fathers and ancient bishops have collected therefrom.”

These quotations define the legal status of tradition in the English Church. Within their limits they include, as

* *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, II. viii: 5 and 7.

they were no doubt intended to include, a wide divergence of views. It is clear that, in framing her legal formularies, she was guided by the principle of "comprehension." In fact, no other communion comprehends so great a variety of elements. Her history justifies the famous description of Lord Chatham, "Calvinistic articles, a Popish ritual, and an Arminian clergy." At the present day, her Articles and canons give ample room for the three parties into which the establishment is divided, High Church, Broad Church, and Low Church. These parties, especially High Churchmen and Low Churchmen, hold very different views of tradition and Church authority. To set these views down in detail, is foreign to the purpose of this essay. Nothing more is called for than to state the principal opinions on this subject held by the majority of Church-of-England divines. As the Anglican Church professes to walk the *via media* between Catholicism and pronounced Protestantism, so there is a *via media* within her own communion. I shall seek to walk along this path, simply noting when the principal divergent roads take off to the right and left.

1. The Scriptures are an all sufficient rule of religious faith. Nothing is enjoined as of faith that is not read therein, nor can be proved thereby. More definitely, the Anglican position is thus stated by Dr. Harold Browne, Bishop of Ely:

"The Church of England then holds, in conformity with the Church of old, that Scripture is absolutely perfect in relation to the end to which it tends, namely, the teaching us all things necessary to salvation. She denies the existence and rejects the authority of any parallel and equal tradition, of any doctrines necessary to salvation, handed down from generation to generation. But it is not true that the Church of England rejects the proper use of tradition, though she will not suffer it to be unduly exalted. She does not neglect the testimony of antiquity, and cut herself off from the communion of the Saints of old."*

* *Exposition of the Articles*, p. 182.

2. Tradition confirms Scripture. This it does by witnessing to the Sacred Books, by teaching the same great doctrines, and by supporting some doctrines that are more a matter of inference from Scripture than of expressed verbal teaching. The latter point is thus argued by Bishop Patrick:

"We allow that tradition gives us a considerable assistance in such points as are not in so many letters and syllables contained in the Scriptures, but may be gathered from thence by good and manifest reasoning. Or, in plainer words, perhaps, whatsoever tradition justifies any doctrine that may be proved by the Scriptures, though not found in express terms there, we acknowledge to be of great use, and readily receive and follow it, as serving very much to establish us more firmly in that truth, when we see all Christians have adhered to it. This may be called a *confirming tradition*: of which we have an instance in infant baptism, which some ancient Fathers call an Apostolical tradition."^{*}

3. Tradition is of great value in interpreting Scripture. Anglicans firmly hold the hermeneutical tradition. Hence, preachers are enjoined "to take heed that they deliver nothing from the pulpit to be religiously held and believed by the people, but that which is agreeable to the Old and New Testaments, *and such as the Catholic Fathers and ancient bishops have collected therefrom.*" Bishop Patrick says: "We look on this tradition as nothing else but the *Scripture unfolded*: not a new thing, but the Scripture explained and made more evident." Cranmer writes: "I also grant that every exposition of the Scripture whereinsoever the old, holy, and true Church did agree, is necessary to be believed." Anglicans hold with St. Vincent. Tradition is the measure of the meaning of the Word of God; antiquity is a "note" of the Church. The Bishop of Ely argues further:

"Truth is one, but error is multiform; and we know that in process of time new doctrines constantly sprang up in the Church, and by degrees gained footing and took root. We believe, therefore, that if we can learn what was the constant teaching of the primitive Christians, we

^{*} Quoted by the Bishop of Ely, *Exposition*, p. 187.

shall be most likely to find the true sense of Scripture preserved in that teaching, and wherever we can trace the first rise of a doctrine, and so stamp it with novelty, the proof of its novelty will be the proof of its falsehood; for what could find no place among the earliest churches of Christ, can scarcely have come from the Apostles of Christ, or from a right interpretation of the Scriptures which they wrote.”*

The Anglican Church holds with Tertullian, “What is first, is true; what is later, adulterate.”

4. The Church has authority in controversies of faith, limited by God’s written Word. But in such controversies she is not to interpret Scripture otherwise than the Church catholic. To prove that “universal tradition, as determining the meaning of Scripture must be true, and therefore a safe guide in controversies of faith,” Palmer reasons as follows:

“If, then, any given doctrine was universally believed by those Christians who had been instructed by the Apostles; if this doctrine was received by all succeeding generations as sacred and divine, and strictly conformable to those Scriptures which were read and expounded in every church; this belief, one and uniform, received in all churches, delivered through all ages, triumphing over the novel and contradicting doctrines which attempted to pollute it, guarded with jealous care, even to the sacrifice of life in its defense, and after a lapse of eighteen hundred years believed as firmly by the overwhelming mass of Christians among all nations, as when it was first promulgated; such a doctrine must be a truth of revelation. It rests on evidence not inferior to that which attests the truth of Christianity. Is it possible that the infinite majority of Christians in all ages can have mistaken or adulterated their own religion, a religion which they held to be divine, and on which they believed their salvation to depend?”†

5. “The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies.” This does not mean that the Church can create ordinances or sacraments; the “rites” and “ceremonies” that she may “decree” are defined to be things comparatively indifferent in themselves, the adjuncts and accidents, not the essence and substance of holy things. The

* *Exposition*, p. 183.

† *Treatise of the Church of Christ*, II., p. 47.

ritual used in public worship, the vestments of priests, and rules for administering the affairs of the Church, may serve as examples. The Church must attend to these, since the Bible does not regulate them, that all things may be done decently and in order.

Thoroughly to examine these several propositions, is no part of my purpose. But divines who reason like the Bishop of Ely and Dr. Palmer, may fairly be called on to answer such questions as these: "If the universal tradition must be true, how shall it be ascertained?" "If the Church hath authority in controversies of faith, how is this authority asserted?" To these questions the Catholic returns definite answers. His theory is complete, and his ecclesiastical machinery is fully adequate to do the work for which it is constructed. He points to recognized organs whose functions are to declare tradition and assert authority. But the Anglican either says nothing, or he makes some common-place remarks that do not reach the difficulty. In fact, the logic of the Anglican system hopelessly breaks down at this point. The Church has authority in controversies of faith, but no effectual way of asserting it has been provided. While he still sat in the Tractarian saddle, Dr. J. H. Newman pointed out this weakness as well as some others, in the Articles, in the following incisive paragraph:

"They are evidently framed on the principle of leaving open large questions on which the controversy hinges. They state broadly extreme truths, and are silent about their adjustment. For instance, they say that all necessary faith must be proved from Scripture; but do not say *who* is to prove it. They say that the Church has authority in controversies; but do not say *what* authority. They say that it may enforce nothing beyond Scripture; but do not say *where* the remedy lies when it does. They say that works *before* grace and justification are worthless and worse, and that works *after* grace and justification are acceptable; but they do not speak at all of works *with* God's aid *before* justification. They say that men are lawfully called and sent to minister and preach, who are chosen and called by men who have public authority *given*

them in the congregation; but they do not add *by whom* the authority is to be given. They say that councils called by *princes* may err; they do not determine whether councils called in the name of Christ may err.”*

Perhaps it is unnecessary to add, that the only effectual way to work the doctrines of tradition and Church authority is, to assert the inspiration of the Church, and provide some recognized organ of communication. But Anglicans are cut off from this road out of the difficulty, since they hold that the Scriptures promise to the Church no more than a general indefectibility, not a special and particular infallibility.

But, again, antiquity is a note of the Church. Undoubtedly this is true of the earliest antiquity. But if authority is to be assigned to any other antiquity than that found in the New Testament, it is pertinent to inquire: “How long did it last? What things are *first*, and what things *later*? Besides, what authority is to determine the limits of this antiquity?” The Anglican Articles contain no answers, and practically each man is left to bound antiquity for himself. The *via-media* divines include in their antiquity the first five or six centuries; but this is wholly arbitrary. What is more, the germs of what they call the “Romish corruptions,” some of them in a high state of development, are all found in their antiquity.

Still again, the Anglican system contains antagonistical principles. Private judgment is to be exercised, but only as limited by the authority of the Church. “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation,” and at the same time “the Church hath authority in controversies of faith.” Each of these principles has borne abundant fruit of its own kind. Those who emphasize Scripture pay little attention to tradition; those who emphasize the authority of the Church hold that tradition is entitled to

* *Apologia pro Sua Vita*, p. 129.

great respect, some making it almost co-ordinate with the Bible.

Numerous side roads branch off from the *via media*. The Low-Church, or Evangelical, doctors have the least possible amount of tradition in their religion; they go at once to the Bible, and desire to be on friendly terms with the Protestant sects. The High-Church doctors are loud in their praises of antiquity, and lean towards Rome. The former approve, the latter disapprove, Chillingworth's rule: "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants." These two parties differ widely and acrimoniously as to the extent of Church authority. Nor do Anglicans agree concerning the sources of doctrines and ordinances that they accept in common. Some say there is no warrant for sprinkling, and they accordingly rest it on tradition; others say it is found in Scripture and confirmed by tradition. Some, finding in Scripture small trace of infant baptism, or none, rest it on tradition; others find this practice in Scripture, but welcome the confirmation of antiquity. Similar differences of opinion prevail in regard to the episcopacy. Some authenticate the books of the New Testament by historical testimony; others receive them on authority after the Roman fashion.

CHAPTER IV.

TRADITION IN THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES.

The proper Protestant position respecting tradition is thus stated by Hagenbach, in his "History of Doctrines":

"From the commencement of the Reformation, it became evident, in the course of the struggle, that its adherents proceeded upon a different *formal* principle (as to the source of knowledge, and rule of faith), from that held by the Roman Church of that period. For while the advocates of the Roman Church continually appealed to the authority of tradition, the Protestants refused to yield to any arguments but those clearly drawn from Scripture."*

The assertion of this new formal principle is the most important fact in the history of the Church for a thousand years. Whether Protestants have fully apprehended it, whether they have been true to it, will appear as we go on; certainly it has been so fully and strongly grasped as to constitute the characteristic feature of Protestantism. Let us first look into the mind of Luther, to see how the principle was there developed.

The history of Protestantism may be said to begin with Luther's conclusions respecting the doctrine of justification. By degrees and through fierce struggles, he came to hold that this is by faith alone. From this proposition it was but a step to the next one—the Scriptures are the

*Vol. II., p. 229, 30.

Rule of Faith. Brushing aside penances and indulgences as works of the flesh, without faith and contrary to faith, he saw that everything essential to faith is contained in the Bible. Hence Hagenbach well says that Luther “came to the *formal* principle by means of the *material* principle.” That is, his own spiritual experience led him to rest on faith, and then his inquiry for the basis of faith led him to the Word of God. Accordingly, the Reformation did not begin with a new formal principle : that principle was a second step in the line of progress.

The new principle shaped itself slowly in Luther’s mind, and, in fact, never became clearly defined to him. He began his work in 1517, by opposing Tetzels, who was then hawking the Pope’s indulgences through Germany. He warned the people at the confessional and from the pulpit to have nothing to do with the indulgences. He wrote to the Bishops of Brandenburg and Merseburg, and to the Archbishop of Mayence, asking them to put a stop to Tetzels’ traffic. At this time he had clearly wrought out in his mind the new doctrine of justification. Receiving no encouragement from the bishops, but rather discouragement, he determined to make a direct appeal to the people. Accordingly, Oct. 31, 1517, he posted his famous Theses on the Wittenberg church door, protesting at the same time that he was not so presumptuous as to prefer his own opinion to the opinion of all; but also declaring that he was not so thoughtless as to put the Divine Word below fables of human invention. The following year he sent the Theses to the Bishop of Brandenburg, affirming that he wrote them not dogmatically, but for discussion after the manner of the schools. Later, he made the same declaration to the Pope himself. He denied that his Theses contained anything “contrary to the Scriptures, the Councils, and the Fathers.” In his conference with Urban

the orator, he said : "If I can be convinced that I have said anything in conflict with the understanding of the Holy Roman Church, I will at once condemn it, and retract it." At Augsburg, before Cajetan, he refused to withdraw without argument what he had written; but said he would submit to the Roman Chair. Later still he offered to accept any German bishop as his judge. The Pope having pronounced against him, Luther appealed to a General Council, declaring at the same time that he did not intend "to depart from the sentiments of the Church" or "to doubt the primacy and authority of the Roman See." He renewed his appeal to a council time and again, only to be refused. Rome had not the courage to submit the question. At Leipzig he declared that no Christian could be forced to bind himself to accept aught but the Holy Scriptures, which alone have Divine right. Hagenbach thus traces the growth of the Protestant principle in Luther's mind : "Contending against the false doctrine of justification as seen in the sale of indulgences, he first of all appealed to the Pope; then from the Pope ill informed to the Pope better informed; then to a council; until at last he recognized the authority of Scripture as alone decisive; and elevated this to the rank of a formal principle." In the *Resolutiones*, put forth in 1518, he rose above the authority of Councils. But Luther's appeal to the Bible, in opposition to ecclesiastical tradition, as well as the moral sublime in his life, culminated at Worms, in 1521. In the memorable Diet, in the presence of the notables of the Holy Roman Empire, the princes both of the State and of the Church, the Papal Legate, and of the Emperor himself, he defended his previous course in a long German speech, which he also repeated in Latin for the convenience of the foreign princes, answering at the close the question whether he would recant, in these words : "Not unless I shall be

convinced by the testimonies of the Scriptures or by evident reason (for I believe neither Pope nor councils alone, since it is manifest that they have often erred and contradicted themselves). I am bound by the Scriptures that I have quoted, and my conscience is held captive by the Word of God; and as it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience, I cannot, and will not, retract anything. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me." But long after this Luther professed to respect the authority of the Church, and continued his calls for a council. These calls were in the interest of peace and unity. The conservative quality of Luther's mind constantly appears throughout the controversy with Rome. Even after the breach had become irreparable, the Protestants declared themselves ready to treat, and they actually sent representatives to Trent, where they were refused admission.

The Swiss reformer Zwingle freed himself from the meshes of tradition much more rapidly and much more effectually than Luther. These are his words :

"In fine, that we may stop having to give an answer to everybody about all sorts of objections, this is our view: that the Word of God must be held by us in the highest esteem (by Word of God meaning only what comes from the Spirit of God), and that to no word should be given such faith as to that. For this Word is certain, cannot fail; it is clear, and will not let us wander in darkness; it teaches itself, expounds itself, and makes the human soul to shine with all salvation and grace."*

And still more explicitly : "The Holy Scriptures ought to be leader and teacher, which if any one uses rightly he ought to be unpunished although he greatly displease the overlearned." The other Reformers followed in the path that Luther had struck out. Calvin, for example, says :

"If true religion is to beam upon us, our principle must be, that it is necessary to begin with heavenly teaching, and that it is impossible for any man to obtain even the minutest portion of right and sound doctrine

* *Hagenbach*, II., p. 231.

without being a disciple of Scripture. Hence the first step in true knowledge is taken, when we reverently embrace the testimony which God has been pleased therein to give of himself.”*

But it is time to inquire how the Protestants handled the new principle in their confessions and creeds.

As a class, the Lutheran symbols do not contain a separate article on the Scriptures, but they occasionally denounce tradition. What Cardinal Wiseman calls “the great trenching difference” between Catholics and Protestants was gradually recognized. The Articles of Smalcald, drawn up by Luther in 1536, contain this language: “Articles of faith must not be constructed from the words and deeds of the Fathers. We have another rule, that the Word of God gives articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel.” The Form of Concord, a Lutheran symbol of 1577, contains these words: “We believe, confess, and teach that the only rule and norm, according to which all dogmas and all doctrines ought to be esteemed and judged, is no other whatever than the Prophetic and Apostolic writings, both of the Old and of the New Testament. * * *

But other writings, whether of the Fathers or of the moderns, with whatever name they come, are in no wise to be equalled to the Holy Scripture.” This language is both affirmative and negative; it is an affirmation of the sufficiency of Scripture, and a denial of the claim of Tradition. Generally, the Calvinistic symbols are more specific than the Lutheran, often beginning with an article on the authority of Scripture. Thus the Helvetic Confession, 1536: “Canonical Scripture, the word of God delivered by the Holy Spirit, the most perfect and most ancient philosophy of all, alone contains in perfection all piety, all reason of life.” The second Helvetic, 1566:

“In Holy Scripture the Universal Church of Christ has the fullest expositions, whatever pertains both to saving faith and to a life pleasing to

* *Institutes*, I., vi, 2.

God. * * * We acknowledge no judge of faith other than God Himself, pronouncing through the Holy Scriptures what is true, what false, what must be followed, and what must be escaped. * *

* We refuse to accept human traditions which, though marked by plausible titles, as if they were Divine and Apostolic, and handed down by the living voice of the Apostles, and as it were through the hands of Apostolic men to the succeeding bishops of the Church, nevertheless when placed side by side with the Scriptures, differ from them and show by their obvious difference that they were by no means Apostolic. For just as the Apostles did not teach opposing doctrines, so also the Apostolic men did not put forth things that were opposed to the Apostles. Nay, even it would be impious to affirm that the Apostles handed down with the living voice things contrary to their own writings."

The Gallic Confession of the year 1559, also a Calvinistic symbol: "We believe that the Word contained in these books has proceeded from God and receives its authority from Him alone and not from men. And inasmuch as it is the rule of all truth, containing all that is necessary for the service of God and for our salvation, it is not lawful for men, nor even for angels, to add to it, to take away from it, or to change it. Whence it follows that no authority, whether of antiquity, or custom, or numbers, or human wisdom, or judgments, or proclamations, or edicts, or decrees, or councils, or visions, or miracles, should be opposed to these Holy Scriptures; but, on the contrary, all things should be examined, regulated, and reformed according to them." The Westminster Confession, 1643: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men." Even the Anglican Church, which retains so many features of the old Church, cast her sixth Article in this form: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor

may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite necessary to salvation." Such is the uniform tenor of the Protestant symbols. Even the Remonstrants and the Socinians formerly held the same language; and in Protestant Christendom to-day, except among those rationalizing bodies that repudiate all authority in religion, the Bible is held the only rule of faith and practice. Hagenbach states the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism touching tradition, in the four following particulars :

"1. While the Protestant Church asserts that the Sacred Writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only sure source of religious knowledge, and constitute the sole rule of faith, the Roman Catholic Church assumes the existence of another source together with the Bible, viz : tradition. 2. According to Protestants, the Holy Bible is composed only of the canonical writings of the Old and New Testament, while the Roman Catholics also ascribe canonical authority to the so-called Apocrypha of the Old Testament. 3. The Roman Catholic Church claims the sole right of interpreting the Scripture, while the Protestant Church concedes this right in a stricter sense, to every one who possesses the requisite gifts and attainments, but in a more comprehensive sense to every Christian who seeks after salvation; it proceeds upon the principle, that Scripture is its own interpreter, according to the *analogia fidei*. With this is connected, in the *fourth* place, the assumption of the Roman Catholic Church that the Vulgate Version, which it sanctions, is to be preferred to all other versions, as the authentic one, and is thus to a certain extent of equal importance with the original, while Protestants regard the original only as authentic."*

In theory, Protestants early planted themselves on the doctrine of the Bible alone. But to conclude that they practically emancipated themselves from tradition and Church authority, would be to make a great mistake. How slowly the mighty spirit of Luther disentangled itself from the web of tradition, has been shown already. In fact, he never became wholly free; for to the end of his life his words are contradictory. If so great a mind as

* *History of Doctrines*, II., p. 230.

Luther's did not pass wholly out of the shadow in a life time, how long would it take one-half of Christendom to accomplish that journey? At the sound of the great German's voice, the mind of the North, long imprisoned in the ecclesiastical cocoon, partially burst its fetters; but much still remained to be done before it regained the full liberty of the sons of God. Considerable progress has been made since the days of the early Reformers; but it would be a great error to suppose that what was left undone by Luther and Calvin has even yet been fully accomplished. The power of tradition among Protestants is plainly seen in three particulars:

First: Protestants as a body have never distinctly grasped their formal principle. While stoutly upholding the doctrine of the Bible alone, they have done their work in part under the influence of both tradition and Church authority. Two courses were open to Luther. The first was to pass by history, to go at once to the Apostolic Age, and from the New Testament to reconstruct the Church of the Apostles—its doctrines, its rites, its polity. This course would make Scripture and not antiquity the mirror of Christianity. At the utmost, one who took this course would appeal to the historic development only in those cases where Scripture might leave questions in doubt. Proceeding in this way, Luther would have found fewer such questions rising up to trouble him than the reader will think; for most of the questions that history is asked to decide are questions that history, not Scripture, has suggested. The other course was to accept the historical development in its main features; to begin with the Church as it stood, and, measuring it by the Bible, to inquire what reforms were needed. Either course would lead to the reformation of certain abuses. Still the two methods are radically different. Adopting either, the reformer

would use the Bible, but in different ways. No one can doubt that, in the second case, the work done would be much less sweeping and thorough than in the first. Choosing the first method, the reformer would restore the Church of the Apostles; choosing the other, he would reform the one existing. Whatever difference would appear in the results reached, may fairly be set down to the power of tradition. In another place I shall inquire which of these methods was the correct one; here nothing more need be said than that Luther chose the second. His work did not begin with grasping the truth that the Holy Writings are the sole guide in religion; nor did he ever work from that truth as a center. He grasped rather the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and from this as a center he worked outward to the circumference. On his way, he affirmed the sufficiency of the Scriptures. Whatever stood in the way of the doctrine of justification, according to his apprehension, he intended to reject, even if it were a part of the Bible. Hence he said of the Epistle of James: "This seems to be an Epistle of straw; I throw it into the Elbe." Faith was the powerful instrument with which he proposed to tear off the parasites that had grown upon the Church. In the name of faith, he opposed indulgences, and many of the peculiar Roman corruptions, and even the Pope himself. Other errors and corruptions that he did not encounter in his struggle to restore faith, although wholly without foundation in the Bible, he left undisturbed. Luther sought to reform the Church of the sixteenth century by sweeping her decks, scraping the barnacles from her sides, and by fumigating her hull; but he never consciously sought by the Word of God to restore the Church of the Apostles. The Anglican Church, in her thirty-fourth Article, declares: "Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely, doth openly

break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly," etc. Luther himself declared: "I condemn no ceremonies except those that fight with the Gospel; I preserve all others in our Church whole. I hate no persons more than those who thrust away free and harmless ceremonies, and make a necessity of liberty." The principle involved in these two quotations cannot be misunderstood. It is not, that must be held which is *enjoined* in God's Word, and no more; but, that must be *rejected* which is repugnant thereto. The real formal principle is not an unmistakable precept or an approved example, but the historical development, when it does not conflict with Scripture. The one rule is positive, the other negative: one sanctions only what is commanded, the other rejects everything that is forbidden. The Reformers who followed Luther, almost to a man, practically adopted his rule. Accordingly, we have had the Church reformed times innumerable, and then reforms of the reformations. Protestants have never clearly understood Protestantism.

Second: the early Reformers retained many of the traditions found in the Roman Church. This was over and above their failure, practically, to repudiate her doctrine of tradition. Even now many rites and doctrines are held by Protestants for which no foundation but tradition or Church authority can be found. Some of these will be mentioned for illustration. One is infant baptism.

It is not necessary to inquire when this innovation in the doctrine and practice of the Church arose. But let a man divest his mind of the notion that history is the mirror of the Church; let him go to the New Testament to find out who were admitted to baptism in the age of the Apostles, and the idea that infants were

admitted will never occur to him. Another of these traditions is the practice of sprinkling for baptism. When and how this innovation began, need not be asked, nor how it got a foothold in the Church; certainly no man seeking to reconstruct the Church from the materials found in the New Testament would, for a moment, think of calling sprinkling baptism. Granted a man of intelligence and culture, a man well read in the languages and history of the ancient world, but who has never heard of Christianity—granted such a man, in whose hands the Bible is placed with instructions to build up in his own thoughts the primitive Church; who supposes that the idea of either infant Church membership or of baptism by sprinkling would even for a moment touch the extreme horizon of his mind? The controversies about these practices are not controversies that Scripture suggests. Still, men profess to find proof for both practices in the Bible. The explanation is this: Both practices have long existed; they have obtained a certain prescriptive right; their basis is tradition. Hence, when a man who professes to base his religion on the Bible has accepted either or both of these rites on the ground of tradition, he feels under obligation to find support for them in Scripture. Hence, the desperate and often amusing attempts put forth in that direction; the hard-strained and unnatural interpretations, the labored and far-fetched inferences. These are tributes, no doubt honestly paid in most cases, to consistency. Some Protestants, nor is the number small, realizing the hopelessness of the endeavor to find these practices in the Bible, yet unwilling to surrender them, more penetrating if not more candid than their brethren, repudiate the claim of Scripture authority, and frankly say that they must be rested on extra-scriptural grounds. What these grounds are, they are not agreed on among themselves. Sometimes

it is said, in the one case, the dedication of children to the Lord is a useful and beautiful ceremony; and in the other, that sprinkling or pouring is a more convenient and tasteful ceremony than immersion. More frequently, however, we see a claim of Church authority put forward. The Church has wisely ordained infant membership and sprinkling. This is the substance of the plea made by Calvin in the quotation made below. It need scarcely be said that such a defense, or any defense that yields the controversy on Biblical grounds, is a betrayal of Protestantism into the hands of Rome.

Diocesan Episcopacy was borne into some of the Churches that broke away from Rome, on the stream of tradition. No man who simply looks into the New Testament for the likeness of the Church, would get a glimpse of either the Roman, the Greek, or the Anglican Bishop. The Anglican Church strictly holds to the three orders, Deacons, Priests, and Bishops. At the same time, some of her ablest writers practically yield the bishop so far as the Bible is concerned, and base his claims on history. Hooker attempts to prove the third order Apostolic; but Whately says Hooker ought rather to have taken advantage of the logical presumption: Episcopacy exists; let the man who denies that it is primitive show when it was introduced. Dean Milman says: "Few points in Christian history rest on more dubious and imperfect, in general inferential, evidence" than the primitive constitution of the young Christian republics in the Apostolic days. He grants that the earliest Christian communities appear to have been ruled and represented, in the absence of the Apostle who was the first founder, by the elders, who are likewise called bishops or overseers of the churches. He admits that in Ephesus, in Philippi, and perhaps in Crete, we find only these presbyter-bishops and deacons (see Acts xx, 17, 28; Phil.

i, 1; Tit. i, 5-7). Yet he affirms : "At a very early period, one religious functionary, superior to the rest, appears to have been almost universally recognized"—that is, a bishop in the modern sense. He further affirms that the change from the presbyter-episcopacy to the diocesan-episcopacy "took place within the Apostolic times." To support this proposition, on which the whole argument so far as it is Biblical turns, he offers no proof but this : "The Church of Ephesus, which in the Acts [see chap. xx.] is represented by its elders, in the Revelation (chap. ii.) is represented by its angel or bishop." This is assuming that the angels of the seven churches of Asia are bishops, a mere inference opposed to the weight of the best recent authority. Such argumentation is mere trifling. Milman accepted the episcopacy at the hands of history, as his own language shows. He reasons thus : "It is difficult to understand how, in so short a time, among communities, though not entirely disconnected, yet scattered over the whole Roman world, a scheme of government popular, or rather aristocratical, should become, even in form, monarchical. Neither the times nor the circumstances of the infant Church, nor the primitive spirit of the religion appear to favor a general, a systematic, and an unauthorized usurpation of power on the part of the supreme religious functionary." Against the hypothesis maintained by Mosheim, Gibbon, and Neander, viz : That at first "the affairs of each community or church were governed by a college of presbyters, one of whom necessarily presided at their meetings, and gradually assumed and was recognized as possessing a superior function and authority"—which is the most reasonable hypothesis ever propounded to explain the rise of the episcopacy—he reasons thus :

"But the universal and almost simultaneous elevation of the bishop under such circumstances, in every part of the world (though it must be admitted that he was for a long time assisted by the presbyters in the

discharge of his office), appears to me an insuperable objection to this hypothesis. The later the date which is assumed for the general establishment of the episcopal authority, the less likely was it to be general. It was only during the first period of undivided unity that such a usurpation, for so it must have been according to this theory, could have been universally acquiesced in without resistance. All presbyters, according to this view, with one consent, gave up or allowed themselves to be deprived of their co-ordinate and co-equal dignity. The farther we advance in Christian history, the more we discover the common motives of human nature at work. In this case alone are we to suppose them without influence? Yet we discover no struggle, no resistance, no controversy. The uninterrupted line of bishops is traced by the ecclesiastical historian up to the Apostles; but no murmur of remonstrance against this usurpation has transpired; no schism, no breach of Christian unity followed upon this momentous innovation." *

The import of all this ingenious reasoning is this: The learned historian seeks to determine from post-Apostolic history a material fact in the organization of the Apostolic Church. No refutation is here called for save what can be put in two propositions: Milman assigns too early a date to the appearance of the diocesan bishops, thus unduly narrowing the time within which the revolution in the constitution of the Church took place; also, he exaggerates the difficulty of such a revolution being made, in fact assumes that it was impossible. Much could be said to show that this change was both easy and natural under the circumstances; but leaving that out of the account, Milman's "difficulty" is far smaller than the difficulty of finding diocesan episcopacy in the New Testament. Dr. Lightfoot concedes that in the New Testament the terms elder and bishop are synonymous. He concedes also that, even at the close of the Apostolic Age, the traces of "the episcopate properly so-called are few and indistinct." He concedes, too, that "the episcopate was formed, not out of the Apostolic order by localization, but out of the presbyterial by elevation." Still he claims that James, the Lord's brother, was a "bishop in the later but more special

* *History of Christianity*, N. Y., 1841, p. 194, (text and note).

sense of the term ;” basing the claim on the position assigned him in such passages as Acts xxi, 18; xv, 13; and Gal. ii, 9. At the same time, he acknowledges that the Gentile churches of the New Testament present no traces of a proper episcopal order, and scouts the idea that the angels of the seven churches were bishops. Following this distinguished scholar further, we find that he, like Milman, really accepts the diocesan episcopacy at the hands of the ancient, and not at the hands of the Apostolic Church.*

Another of the human inventions accepted by the Protestant Churches at the hands of Rome, is the practice of using written creeds or confessions of faith as tests of fellowship. In the primitive days, a simple confession of the divinity and Messiahship of Christ was a sufficiently narrow doctrinal gate for the believer to pass on his way to the Saviour. On all hands it is admitted that, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” was the Apostolic confession. Gradually, however, other confessions, called “symbols,” probably from their similarity to the *Symbola*, or pass-words, of secret orders (though this is in dispute), confessions much more elaborate than the original one, obtained general currency. The first of these human confessions were simple and even beautiful formularies, containing little that is objectionable either in doctrine or in expression ; but the later ones are highly speculative in substance and technical in phraseology. As an example of the first, the Apostles’ Creed may be mentioned; of the second, the Athanasian. As these creeds became old, as they became more and more enveloped in venerable associations, the *argumentum ad verecundiam* was appealed to in their behalf; they became a part of the “tradition,” and they securely rested on the firm ground of the Church’s approval. Long before the birth of Luther, the Bible had

* *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians*, London, 1869, p. 193, seq.

been practically laid aside so far as evangelizing and teaching men were concerned; the creeds and the catechisms had taken its place. In short, the creed principle had become firmly fixed in the ecclesiastical economy. The Reformers accepted this principle from the old Church. They did not say, as Rome says, "The creed is to be used instead of the Bible in teaching doctrine;" they rather said, "The creed is a summary of doctrine." Practically, they read the Bible through the creed. In the first place, they accepted the oldest of the existing creeds—the Apostolic, the Nicene, the Athanasian; in the second, they supplemented these creeds by elaborate manufactures of their own. No other error that the Reformers fell into, unless it be the general habit of deferring to antiquity, has so retarded the restoration of primitive Christianity. The dogmatic burdens laid by the Reformers on men's shoulders were, in a measure, different from those laid on by Rome, but they were quite as heavy. In fact, Protestants have surpassed Catholics in the amount of speculative divinity that they have put into their creeds. Both alike have been unwilling to trust man alone with the Bible: the Catholic ties him up to the Church, the Protestant to the Confession.

The boundary of the great shadow cast upon Protestantism by tradition has now been traced a little way. Numerous are the doctrines and rites held and practiced by Protestants for which they have no authority outside of tradition, as Catholics frequently tell them. Protestants sometimes argue from Catholic premises. Calvin, for example, held that the primitive baptism was immersion. This is his language: "It is evident that the term *baptise* means to immerse, and that this was the form used by the primitive Church."* Still, he held to the validity of sprinkling.

* *Institutes* iv., 15, 19.

affirming that it "is not of the least consequence" whether the candidate be immersed or sprinkled. His language is, "Churches should be at liberty to adopt either, according to the diversity of climates." He does not pretend that the New Testament anywhere specifically confers on the Church this power; he avers that in such matters she has power of herself. In his Commentary on the Acts (chap. viii.) this is distinctly stated:

"But so small a difference of the ceremony ought not to be of so much moment to us, as that we should on that account divide the Church or disturb her with dissensions. Indeed, as to the ceremony of baptism itself, so far as it has been delivered to us by Christ, better a hundred-fold to perish by the sword, than to suffer it to be taken from us; but when, in the symbol of water, we have the testimony of our ablution as well as of a new life: when in water, as in a mirror, Christ represents His blood for us, that we may therein seek our purification; when He teaches us to be renewed in His spirit, that dead to Him we may live to righteousness; nothing, it is certain, is wanting to us that pertains to the substance of baptism. Wherefore, from the beginning, the Church has freely allowed herself, except this substance, to have rites somewhat dissimilar; for some immerse three times, others only once." *Quare ab initio libere sibi permisit ecclesia, extra hanc substantiam, ritus habere paululum dissimiles, nam alii ter, alii autem simul tantum mergebat.*

Within certain limits, it will be seen that Calvin claims that the Church has power over the ordinances. This claim, a little more expanded, becomes Romanism. Hagenbach thus sums up the matter:

"With all its adherence to the authority of Scripture, Protestantism could not absolutely withdraw itself from the power of tradition. For even the authority of Scripture rested upon the belief of the Church. The whole historical development could not be ignored; and the Reformers had no hesitation in respect to ecclesiastical usages in particular, to concede to tradition a certain normal, though only human, authority. But even in relation to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, Protestantism declared its agreement with the oldest creeds of the Church, because it believed that the pure doctrine of Scripture was contained in them; yet without thinking it to be necessary, or even advisable, to give these symbols special authority as co-ordinate with the Scriptures."*

* *History of Doctrines*, ii., p. 248.

Third: there speedily sprang up a Protestant tradition. In process of time, the symbolical and other writings of the early Reformers, but especially the symbolical writings, commanded much of the respect and reverence that had belonged to the Fathers and to the decrees of early councils. Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and Knox became the Fathers of new spiritual societies. This was not intended or desired by the Reformers themselves. Hagenbach says: "That the same importance should afterwards be assigned to the symbolical writings of the Protestant Churches, which was formerly assigned to tradition, was not the intention of their original authors." * He says also: "It is well known that Luther strongly protested against any prominence being given to his name, and all appeal to his authority." † Nor was it Luther's object to form a new Church. He strove rather to reform the old one, and to restore ancient Christianity. He had no taste for denominationalism, and protested against Lutheranism in advance. "I beseech you above all things," he wrote in 1522, "not to use my name, not to call yourselves Lutherans, but Christians." Similar protests were put in some of the creeds. The Form of Concord declares: "But the other symbols and other writings
* * * do not possess the authority of the Judge, for this dignity belongs to Holy Scripture alone: but merely give testimony to our religion, and set forth to show in what manner from time to time the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in the Church of God by the doctors who then lived, as respects controverted articles, and by what arguments the dogmas at variance with the Holy Scriptures were rejected and condemned." ‡ Still more explicitly the first Confession of

* *History of Doctrines*, II., p. 232.

† *Ibid.*, II., p. 249.

Basle: "And lastly, we submit this our confession to the authority of Holy Writ, and are willing to render grateful obedience to God and His Holy Word, whenever we shall be better instructed therefrom." Creeds that contain such language as this could not have been intended for a finality. They left the way open for the confessor to go forward as God gave him light to see the way. But the protests of the Reformers and the warnings of the creeds were unavailing. In the words of the great writer who has furnished so many facts for this discussion: "With all its theoretical opposition to any other authority than that of Scripture, Protestantism soon came to be dependent upon its own tradition; for the words of Luther, and the declarations of the confessions of faith, became (as it was not intended they should be) a standard and restraint, in the subsequent exegetical and doctrinal developments."* Some of the later confessions reveal a positive deterioration in their teaching as to the source of doctrine. The Form of Agreement seems to put the Word of God and the early Protestant confessions on the same level; while the Canons of Dort say in so many words: "This doctrine, the Synod judges to be drawn from the Word of God, and to be agreeable to the confessions of the Reformed Churches." In this way the earlier creeds were used as standards to measure the later ones. Hence, they constantly tended to religious formalism and ossification.

How the new tradition came to be formed, will be clear enough to those who have studied the formation of the old one. Habits of thought tend to perpetuate themselves. They even become hereditary. We cannot be indifferent to the past, even if we would: We pay a certain respect to what our fathers thought and did. There is a sentiment that leads a Christian to prize a Bible that be-

* *Hagenbach*, II., p. 249.

longed to his mother. We love the hymns that our ancestors sang, the forms that they observed, the thoughts that filled their hearts. The past ever casts its light and shade over the present and the future. Hence, the *argumentum ad verecundiam* plays a great part in the affairs of men. It aids in securing a continuity of intellectual, moral, and religious life from age to age. It furnishes a large share of that mental inertia without which spiritual stability is impossible. But this habit of mind, carried too far, makes the present the slave of the past, and forever confines a man to the mental circle in which his father walked. In no other sphere does man so much need to be upon his guard against this mental habit as in religion, because in no other is it so powerful. It is one root of veneration. What wonder, then, that the very spirit which led Catholic believers of the fourth century to venerate the names of Clement and Irenæus led the Protestants of the seventeenth and eighteenth to venerate those of Luther and Calvin! The results differ in degree, not in kind. The traditional habit of mind gave the old Church the Catholic tradition; it gave the new Churches the Protestant tradition. In the one, figure Clement, Irenæus, Jerome, and Augustine; in the other, Luther, Melanethon, Calvin, and Knox. In the one, Nicea, Chalcedon, Constantinople, and Rome are surrounded with venerable religious associations; so in the other are Augsburg, Geneva, and Westminster. No Christian body can be found that has reached the age of half a century, which has not something that answers for a tradition. Called infallible, as the Roman tradition is, such a tradition is a deadly thing; looked upon as human but constantly deferred to and venerated, as the Protestant tradition is, it is a barrier to progress; respected but thoroughly discussed and calmly weighed, it is a source

both of beauty and of strength. How heavily the Protestant tradition has pressed upon the Protestant mind, and how much it has retarded progress, can be learned only from its history. How difficult to change an old formulary! The proposition to remove a single comma from the prayer book agitates, almost convulses, the Episcopal Church. Many Presbyterians, both clergymen and laymen, are dissatisfied with the Westminster Confession, but they find revision unattainable. And yet had the old Confession never been made, were the Presbyterian body, cut loose from the past, now called upon to make a new one, that they would make it according to the pattern shown in Westminster, probably no man believes. Those who accept its harsher doctrines, defend them on grounds of Scripture; but their real defense is, "This Confession was made at Westminster, and has been believed and loved by Presbyterians for more than two hundred years." It is tradition that compels the recitation in Anglican worship of the Athanasian Creed with its hair-splitting subtleties and damnatory clauses; tradition that keeps the sacramentarian elements in the Book of Common Prayer; tradition that retains the gloomiest doctrines of Calvin in the standards of the Presbyterian Church. It was tradition that led the Rev. E. D. Morris, D. D., once a Moderator of the General Assembly* of that Church, to say:

"We believe that we have a creed sanctioned by the whole historic life and reflection of the Reformation; born as perhaps not only the last, but even a most consummate flower in that long succession of creeds in which the Protestant Church crystalizes the common faith. That confession has stood for more than two centuries as the basis, and the test, and the standard of our belief. No man in all this broad Church would dare touch it. No man in all this broad Church has any purpose in his inmost heart to change or alter it. We propose to stand by it while we stand at all."

What more could a Catholic say for his tradition?

* Cleveland, 1875.

What more could a Protestant say for the Bible? No man proposes to alter it! No man to touch it! And yet that it is far from satisfactory to many Presbyterians, is a matter of common notoriety. What shall we call this but idolatry? What, indeed, unless we adopt the new word struck out in the Presbyterian debate, and call it "symbolatry." In fact, it may as well be admitted, that to change the doctrinal standard of any great Protestant Church within the Church is a practical impossibility. Attempts at "revision," "modification," and the like might as well be given up so far as accomplishing them is concerned; as aids to progress in other directions, they may be of service. In the early history of Protestantism, revision and modification within the same communion, that is, new creeds, were numerous. How many are the early Lutheran and Calvinistic creeds! That was when these bodies were in a degree plastic; before faith had ossified, or, to use Dr. Morris's words, "crystalized." Time had to elapse, allowing opportunity for the tradition to become rigid, before any Protestant could say of his creed, "I propose to stand by it while I stand at all." What great Protestant body has changed its standard within one hundred years? There have been new creeds produced by secessions; but within what great body has there been enough of the innovating spirit to overcome the denominational inertia? But to say that innovation is not needed, is to say that absolute truth has been reached. It is often said by the defenders of written creeds, that the Christian who does not use them has an oral creed, a creed of the mind. Granting for argument's sake that the point is well taken, it may be replied, and history lends the reply irresistible force, The creed of the mind is the easier to change.

I have said above that no Christian body can be found

that has reached the age of fifty years, which has not something that answers for a tradition. It may have been originally a painstaking and pious interpretation of Scripture; but it now lives on, not alone because it is thought to have original warrant of Scripture, but because some man, or men, found it, or thought he or they found it, in Scripture. It lives because it *has* lived. No more instructive, because no more recent, proof of this fact is known to me than is presented by the facts which I am about to state.

In the first quarter of this century, our country gave birth to a religious movement that courageously undertook to carry out the Protestant principle. Its aim was to get back of the historical development, and hold up the New Testament as the mirror of Christianity. It did not propose to reform any existing ecclesiastical organization, but to reconstruct from New Testament materials the Church of the Apostles. To use an old figure and to borrow another's words, Alexander Campbell sought "to take the old field notes of the Apostles, and run the original survey, beginning at Jerusalem." Those who led this movement to restore Christianity emblazoned on their banners: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where they are silent, we are silent." It is not pertinent to discuss this movement here, further than to try it by the three *criteria* laid down in this chapter for the measurement of the Protestant Churches:

1. It is unquestionably true that the Disciples of Christ have clearly and firmly grasped the Protestant principle: the Bible and private judgment the guides in the field of religion. I do not say they have always been true to it.

2. The historical development made some mark upon the new movement; meaning by this expression, not simply the development with its reasons, but the development a

a fact. This may be said to have been both natural and inevitable.

3. The fifty years had not passed when the new tradition appeared. As things go, the man who can say, "Campbell and Scott held such and such a view," or who can affirm, "Such and such has been the uniform teaching among us," feels that he advances an argument of no mean power. I am far from saying that this tradition is used as an ecclesiastical test; but he would be either a very bold or a very ignorant man who should deny its existence or its power. One of the best known and most scholarly of the Disciple ministers, in a private communication lying before me, says: "Many do not see that tradition is a very human, a very common fact, and that we too have already our *corpus traditionum* held in a kind of semi-sacred awe, and appealed to as of the fathers."

It has been stated above, that Protestants, as a class, have failed to understand Protestantism; that they have imperfectly understood their own principle. What does the principle, "The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants," mean? It means that the Church, its doctrines, ordinances, and polity, everything belonging to it, except those expedients or prudentials that, in the very nature of the case, depend on time and place, are found in Scripture; and that Christians are shut up to this Scriptural model which they have no liberty to alter or modify. As has been shown, the Reformers give too much stress to the historical development of the Church. They mistook the spiritual unity and continuity of which Christ speaks, for an objective, ecclesiastical, historic unity and continuity. Hence, they reformed the existing Church by sweeping away some of the old errors and abuses, guided by the negative principle of repugnancy to the Word of God, rather than restored the old Church by the positive principle of conformity.

The Protestant profession to repudiate tradition must be taken with many allowances. Protestants have never wholly repudiated the doctrine. They have retained some of the Catholic traditions. They have elaborated a tradition of their own. At the same time, Protestantism is separated from Catholicism by an immense interval. The new tradition does not smother spiritual life to the same degree as the old one. The Protestant has an open Bible, though he may read it through the creed; the Catholic hardly reads it at all, but is shut up to the authority of the Church. We must exonerate the great Reformers, especially Luther, from responsibility in fixing the new tradition; but only to lay a heavier burden on the shoulders of their followers. How different might have been the history of Protestantism, could the principle set forth at Basle have been followed: "We submit this our confession to the authority of Holy Writ, and are willing to render grateful obedience to God, and His Holy Word, whenever we shall be better instructed therefrom."

NOTE.—Doctrinal progress within the creed-churches is made by putting new constructions on the creed. When the symbol was made, its words had a definite meaning; this continues to be the meaning of those who adhere to the form, until they outgrow it; then, unless one has the courage to renounce the form, he discovers that the words will bear a new sense. In this way the old creed is nearly subverted by theological fiction. Many of these later meanings are unnatural and absurd, not to say dishonest.

PART III.

THE VALUE OF TRADITION.

CHAPTER I.

IS TRADITION A SOURCE OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE ?

In the first Part of this work, the origin and early history of tradition were investigated; in the second Part tradition, as a doctrine, as held by the great divisions of Christendom, was stated; and it remains only to consider its value. It has been shown that Catholics, Greeks, and some Anglicans make it an original and independent source of Divine knowledge. The best introduction to this chapter will perhaps be a more detailed statement of the doctrines and rites said to be received through this channel.

Bellarmin, the great Jesuit theologian, according to the Bishop of Ely, specifies the following:

“How women under the old Law might be delivered from original sin, circumcision being only for males; and how males under eight days old might be saved from it. The perpetual Virginity of the blessed Virgin Mary, which has always been believed by the Church, and yet is not in Scripture. That Easter should be kept on a Sunday, which is necessary to be believed against the Quarto-Decimans. Infant Baptism, which is necessary to be believed; but neither Romanists nor Protestants can prove it from Scripture. That there is a Purgatory, which Luther himself believed, and yet admitted that it could not be found in Scripture.”*

Other doctrines said to be more or less dependent on tradition are these: The equality of the three Persons in

* *Exposition of the Articles*, p. 144.

the Trinity, the procession of the Spirit from both the Father and the Son, Christ's descent into Hell, and the change of the Sabbath to the Lord's day.

Believers in tradition are far from being agreed on the questions, "What doctrines are dependent on tradition? and What is the extent of the dependence?" The Roman theologians, always ready to enlarge tradition at the expense of the Bible, hold that some doctrines are wholly dependent on tradition, others partly so. The doctrines mentioned above are not the exclusive property of Romanists; most Anglicans also receive them, some resting them on Scripture, some on Scripture and tradition, some on tradition alone. When these doctrines are held by Protestants, they are theoretically based on the Bible. Catholics charge Protestants with inconsistency on this point. Kernan, for example, says, "Protestants believe many things essentially necessary to salvation which are not contained in Scripture," and instances the following :

"The Scripture does not anywhere say that all the books composing itself are the word of God; it cannot tell us whether our copies of it are correct; whether our translations from these are faithful; whether the books of Scripture that are lost are a necessary part of the rule of faith; it does not tell us whether infants should be baptized; whether the obligation of keeping Saturday holy has been done away with; whether Sunday should be kept in its place, or at what hour the day of rest should commence and terminate; all these and twenty-four other necessary points are not clearly laid down in the Sacred Volume."*

Bishop Montague, of the English Church, if we may follow a note to Bossuet's "Exposition," declares that "there are six hundred particulars, instituted by God in the point of religion, commanded and used by the Church, of which we own that the Scripture delivers or teaches no such thing."† It would be easy to show that Catholics, in

* *Doctrinal Catechism*, pp. 87-8.

† Fletcher's Edition, pp. 206-7.

charging inconsistency upon Protestants, in respect to tradition, have had the better of the argument.

It does not come in my way critically to examine the doctrines given above as examples; to inquire which are true, which false; but it is important to examine the underlying question, whether tradition is a source of Divine teaching?

As has been shown, there issued from the Apostolic Age two streams of the water of life flowing in parallel channels, the oral and the written Gospels. Standing at the close of this age one might ask, Will both these streams flow on side by side across the field of future history? Dropping the figure, Is it the Divine intention that the Gospel shall continue to exist in a two-fold form? Mark, the question is not, "Will Christianity continue to be propagated both by oral and written teaching?" but, "Will tradition and Scripture continue to be authoritative sources of Christian knowledge?" The question is involved in heated controversy, and is not by any means free from difficulty. First of all, let it be brought within its narrowest limits.

There is no controversy about the New Testament, the written Christianity; both Protestants and Catholics hold that this is permanently authoritative. No other sufficient reason for its being written could be assigned; besides, its permanency is expressly taught. What is more, it is admitted on all hands that the oral teachings had been authoritative until the New Testament was written. Hence, the only room for difference of opinion is on the question, Was the oral tradition to cease? The Protestant promptly answers yes; but if called on to give a reason for his answer, it is doubtful whether he would be able to give it with equal promptness.

Bossuet is quite right when he says: "Christ Jesus laid the foundations of His Church upon the authority of

preaching. And the consequence, therefore, is that the unwritten word was the first rule of Christianity." It must be admitted, too, that there is a measure of truth in the great Bishop's further words: "A rule which, even when books of the New Testament were superadded to it, did not upon this account lose any share of its former authority." Nor can such facts as the following be excluded from the question. In no place does the New Testament teach that oral tradition is to cease, and that the written Word is to be all in all. Nor is there any reason to suppose that the Apostles so taught; if they did, their teaching was oral and has itself disappeared. In no place in the New Testament are the oral traditions disparaged; on the other hand, the disciples were expressly commanded to observe them. What is more, there is no period in the history of the ancient Church where an oral tradition does not appear. It existed before either Gospels or Epistles were written; the Epistles constantly recognize its existence and its authority; traces of it are found in the literature of the first half of the second century; while the great controversialists who wrote at the close of that century constantly appeal to it in their disputes with the heretics. Not only so, from the age of Irenæus to the age of Leo XIII., both branches of the Church, East as well as West, hold aloft what they call the torch of Apostolic tradition. Was it, then, the Divine intention that oral tradition should cease to be a channel of religious knowledge? I answer, Yes, and base my answer on three grounds: the nature of the case, the facts of history, and the analogy of Scripture.

First: on *a priori* grounds we should not expect Christianity, either in whole or in part, to maintain a permanent oral form. The very fact that it was written is indicative of the Divine intention. A written record is fixed,

permanent, adapted to preserve the faith, and there is no need, therefore, of a supplemental oral word. How multi-form, inconstant, and fluctuating an oral tradition is, all persons know who are familiar with such subjects. Spoken words perish almost with the breath that gives them birth; and those that survive are changed as they pass from hand to hand. They may be "winged," as Homer calls them, and for that very reason they are the more inconstant. Hence it is that critics make such a great difference between a tradition, although it may have assumed a written form, and a contemporary written record. A secret society or a consolidated hierarchy may preserve one in a state approaching purity for a considerable period, but not permanently. Poems, as those of Homer, have been transmitted in this way for generations without losing their integrity; the Talmudic traditions were thus kept alive two centuries; and the grammatical traditions of the Rabbis more than thrice as long. But an elaborate system of doctrines and rites, like Christianity, transmitted to a great popular body like the Church, could not be preserved in this way without a constant miracle. It is true that the ministry was designed to watch over the purity of the faith, but the ministry would be powerless to prevent a constant deterioration. But it may be said, the written Gospel would serve to counteract the process of decay in the unwritten; the latter would lean upon the former and be supported by it; in other words, tradition would constantly renew itself at the fountain of Scripture. While there is some force in this reasoning, no man of candor, who knows how written books, and much more unwritten teachings, tend to corruption—how fluid the texts of all old books, including the New Testament, are—can regard it as a sufficient answer. What is more, the reply is inconsistent with the proposition that it is thrown out to sup-

port. If tradition is trustworthy because it is supported by Scripture—if we are to accept it because we can verify it by Scripture—then we may as well go at once to the standard of truth and abandon all substitutes. What is more, even written words sometime lose their meaning. How great the uncertainty concerning the meanings of old Hindu, Persian, and even Grecian texts.* Translations of classic authors considerably vary. How idle, then, to suppose that an attempt to transmit a body of teaching orally could meet with success. Confucius and Socrates rank high among the oral teachers; but how much should we know of their teachings if their disciples had not reduced them to writing? Hence, the very nature of an oral teaching renders it impossible that it could have been intended as a permanent standard of Divine truth.

So overwhelming is this reasoning, that Catholic writers do not pretend to meet it except by asserting the infallibility of the Church, i. e., a constant miracle. An infallible church is a necessary condition of a trustworthy tradition. Either Catholics must abandon their claim altogether, or rest its defense on a continuous inspiration. There will always be a need for a preached Gospel immediately drawn from the written Word of God, and capable of

* Professor Max Muller, in his essay on "Progress of Zend Scholarship," remarks at some length on this point. "How many words there are in Homer," he says, "which have a traditional interpretation, as given by our dictionaries and commentaries, but the exact purport of which is completely lost, is best known to Greek scholars. It is easy enough to translate *πολίμιοι γέφυραι* by the bridges of war, but what Homer really meant by these *γέφυραι* has never been explained. It is extremely doubtful whether bridges, in our sense of the word, were known at all at the time of Homer; and even if it could be proved that Homer used *γέφυραι* in the sense of a dam, the etymology, i. e., the earliest history of the word, would still remain obscure and doubtful."—*Chips from a German Workshop*, N. Y., 1869, I., p. 133.

being tested by it; but no man of intelligence, who has not been reared up under the shadow of tradition, is likely to think a traditional Gospel, in whole or in part, a feature of God's plan of salvation.

Second: the argument from history supports that drawn from the nature of the case. What doctrines or what rites of an undisputed Apostolical character are found in tradition? Only those that are found in the Bible. Besides, when such doctrine or rite is found, the probability is that it was drawn from the Bible long after the first age of the Church. The very law of oral tradition renders it impossible that it can maintain itself, unless continually renewed from a more certain source of knowledge. Left to itself, it either perishes or becomes so corrupt as to lose its genuineness. Passing by the Apocryphal Gospels and Epistles, the genuineness of which is denied by both Catholic and Protestant, how little is there in the literature of the ancient Church that is not found in Scripture, for which it can even be pretended that it is Apostolical! And after a century or two nothing is found that is not challenged. Canon Westcott says: "It is a fact of great significance, that traditional accounts of words and works of the Lord which are not noticed in the Gospels are extremely rare. The Gospels are the full measure of what was known in the Apostolic Age, and (may we not add?) of what was designed by Providence for the instruction of after ages."* He then gives a list of such traditional waifs having some claim to truth, about thirty in number; all he had been able to collect, though he does not pretend that the list is complete. Words and works of the Apostles resting on a similar basis are also rare. How feeble and flickering this so-called light is, is shown by the fact that the appeal to

* *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, London, 1867, p. 428.

it settles nothing. Controversialists who cannot settle their disputes within the Bible go to the history of the early Church for arguments. But no great controversy about doctrines or rites or politics has been settled by such appeal. Again, the human affluents that continually flowed into the stream of tradition prove that tradition never could have been intended as a permanent channel of the water of life. Follow the two streams from the time they break out of the Apostolic Age to the present day. The one, having no fixed channel, flowing here and there, through sand, waste, and swamp, losing its waters and replenishing them from human sources, carries with it, wherever it goes, disease and death; the other, flowing between permanent banks, keeps its waters pure, preserves its volume, and pours along its whole course freshness, health, and life. Admirable as oral teaching is for propagating truth, it is wholly unfitted for a standard of truth.

Third: the argument from Scripture is analogical but conclusive. The Holy Spirit nowhere says that oral testimony should cease. It may be asked, If such was to be the case, why is there not a plain command to that effect? I answer, it was taken for granted; the writing of the Gospel, together with the very superiority of a written over an oral testimony, was sufficient. If not, the analogy of Scripture should be conclusive. Christ never speaks of tradition but in terms of condemnation. "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" He asks. "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," He declares. Again, He charges the Pharisees with "making the word of God of none effect through your [their] traditions."* The Jewish Rabbis, like the Catholic doctors, declared that they had an unwritten law of God. It is this pre-

* Matt., xv., 3, 9, and Mark, vii., 13.

tended law that Christ is condemning in the above passages. This fact, however, does not break the force of the argument. A large share of the Old Testament, like the New Testament, was, at first, an oral deliverance. This oral deliverance was afterward written down; and that written word, together with the parts of the Old Testament that never were oral, is what the Lord calls the law of God. It is not likely that a teacher who denounced one oral tradition on the ground that it made void the law of God would incorporate into his own Gospel another one. The principle and tendency of tradition is the same under both dispensations, as Catholics themselves virtually admit when they assert that there was an authoritative Jewish tradition. Whenever a religious tradition is mentioned in the New Testament, save the "things delivered" mentioned by Paul, it is mentioned only to be condemned. In striking contrast to this, Scripture is the theme of constant eulogy. "Search the Scriptures * * * they are they which testify of me."* "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures."† "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them [the impenitent brothers of the rich man] hear them" [the writings of Moses and the Prophets.]‡ It is true that these passages relate to the Old Testament; but the principle and tendency of Scripture, like the principle and tendency of tradition, are always the same. As the spirit of Christ's denunciations of the Jews for following their traditions condemns those who follow tradition now; so these eulogies of Old Testament Scripture in spirit apply to the New. When it is said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,"§ the spirit

* John v., 39. † Matt. xxii., 29. ‡ Luke xvi., 29. § II. Tim. iii, 16, 17.

of the passage reaches forward as well as backward. What is more, the Holy Spirit in Revelation says over and over again: "Write what the Spirit says unto the Churches." Besides, the anathema denounced upon all who should add to or subtract from the same book, while it literally relates to the Revelation only, in principle embraces the whole canon, of which this book is the close. Finally, the reason assigned by Luke for writing his Gospel, "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed,"* expressly recognizes the imperfections of an oral teaching, even in the first age, when this teaching was at its best, and the necessity of a more thorough training. Theophilus has been taught orally; that he may "know the certainty of those things" which have been taught him, a written Gospel is necessary. If this was necessary in the age of the Apostles, much more in the ages to come; if necessary in case of one man, who probably had exceptional opportunities for knowledge, much more in the case of the whole Church.

These arguments amply sustain the Protestant position. But while we cannot suppose that oral tradition was intended to be a permanent channel of Divine knowledge, it is easy to see how the ancient Church continued thus to regard it. Some of the reasons have been given already, and another will now be added. Let it be distinctly understood, however, that the Church, in teaching tradition, did not originate a new form of teaching and declare it authoritative; all that she did was to hold on to an old form, and to consider it as authoritative, after the time for its abandonment had come.

* Luke, i., 3, 4.

The modern Christian, especially the Protestant, draws a clear line of demarkation between the Apostolic and the sub-Apostolic Ages. On the one side he finds inspired teachers and infallible authority; on the other, teachers possessing only the ordinary human qualities. He crosses the line at a step, and passes from the supernatural to the natural. All this is very clear to the mind of the modern Protestant, who puts all proper miracle in Christianity *at its beginning*. But what reason has he for drawing such a line at the close of the Apostolic Age? That the age of miracles should cease, is nowhere expressly taught, nor is it very plainly implied. Then why do we not continue the age of miracles far down into the patristic period, as was almost universally done two or three centuries ago, or to the present, as the Catholic Church does now? A full answer would require an essay: only two or three considerations can here be urged.

1. There was no need of a perpetual inspiration. Miracle is necessary for the earlier, but not for the later, stages of a Divine religion. Once originated by miracle, such a religion can safely be left to natural forces and methods. God's work, both in nature and in grace, begins in miracle; once begun, it moves on under the general laws that He has established.

2. History very plainly shows that the line drawn by the Protestant is not imaginary. There are no well attested miracles this side of the Apostolic Age. What is more, no man living at this distance can read the writings of the two ages, and not see a great difference in their tone and quality. Compare the epistles of the Apostles with the epistles of the Apostolic Fathers. The difference is most marked. "In other cases," says Neander, who calls the striking difference between these writings "a phenomenon singular in its kind,"—"in other cases, transitions are

wont to be gradual; but in this instance we observe a sudden change. There are here no gentle gradations, but all at once an abrupt transition from one style of language to another; a phenomenon which should lead us to acknowledge the fact of a special agency of the Divine Spirit in the souls of the Apostles."* There can be no doubt that the ancient Church wisely excluded the patristic writings from the Canon.

3. But was this abrupt transition equally obvious to the minds of contemporary Christians? Did those Christians who lived in the last quarter of the first century know how great a change was taking place? Did they know that "tongues" were ceasing, that "prophecies" were failing, and that hereafter Scripture was to be the only standard of faith and practice? With reference to these matters, what was the Christian consciousness at the close of the first century? It is almost impossible for one living at this distance to throw himself into the thoughts and feelings of that age; scarcely one in a million ever attempts it. In attempting this achievement, I have reached these conclusions: (1) The Church of that age had little sense of history, as the early disciples in Jerusalem had none. Millenarian views were general, and small attention was paid to the future. It was not until she had entered the second century, that the Church waked up to the fact that she had a future, and began consciously to prepare herself for her long march. Hence, such questions as those asked above received but little attention. (2) The first Christian writings after those of the Apostles assign to Jesus a solitary place: He is both Lord and Christ. They also put the Apostles in a class by themselves. Their whole tone negatives the idea that the Apostles were to have successors, either in labors or in authority. Ignatius, Clement,

* *History of the Church*, Boston, I., p. 656, 7.

Polycarp, and the rest do not pretend to Apostolic rank. But (3) it does not follow that the Christians of that age saw what we see. That the ancient Church believed in the continuance of miracles, can be proved from her literature. Besides, the difference between Luke, Peter, Paul, and John on the one hand, and the Apostolic Fathers on the other, was seen less clearly than it is now. This explains why certain books ultimately pronounced uncanonical were sometimes held canonical. The Epistles of Clement, for example, were by some churches considered Scripture, as much as those of Paul. There is no denying, therefore, that the vision of the Church of the second and third ages was obscured and confused; sometimes it saw face to face, sometimes "through a glass darkly," sometimes not at all. The ancient Church, as a body, failed to see that tradition was one of the things that would pass away.

Two principal conclusions are reached: *First*, it was the Divine intention that tradition should cease to be an authoritative source of knowledge; *second*, the ancient Church, as a body, never so understood it. The truth in respect to tradition, as in respect to so many other things, is that the ancient Church missed her way. This, however, is not conceding what Catholics assert, viz: that the ancient Church held Scripture insufficient for salvation, and tradition to be supplementary to it. The ancient Church held to the sufficiency of Scripture, and appealed to tradition as another form of the same teaching. What Clement, Tertullian, and Irenæus thought would be the position of tradition in the future, we cannot say: certain it is that they regarded it as a Divine testimony in their time. I have not been able to discover a time from the day Paul wrote the Epistles to the Thessalonians onward, that, in the sense above defined, the Church did not hold to tradition.

No doubt the statements made above as to the currency of tradition in the ancient Church, will be objectionable to

many Protestants; not so much, however, on account of any evidence that they have to the contrary, as on account of the fancied consequences of the admissions. They will ask, "If tradition was received in the ancient Church, why must we reject it?" That is to accept the very thing which they propose to condemn. The second century is no more a mirror of faith in respect to tradition than in respect to other subjects. We are not to accept tradition because tradition says we must.

Protestants fall into continual blunders from supposing that the great apostacy came suddenly, and at a considerable distance from the Apostolic Age. There was no sudden apostacy, but only a gradual one. It is hardly too much to say, the Church began to apostatize as soon as it was planted. Speaking more exactly, the Church is an organism, and from the beginning we find in it two processes analogous to those found in the human body—waste and nutrition; a tendency to deterioration and a tendency to repair. As food and drink restore the constant loss of the human organism, so teaching and discipline counteract the constant tendency of the Church to lapse from the primitive faith and practice. Corruptions of doctrine, of polity, were gradually introduced, no doubt more rapidly at some times than others; but there was no great cataclysm that destroyed the integrity of the Church. No doubt the Church of the second century was purer than the Church of the third or fourth; but why is it stranger that the second century should have gone wrong on tradition than that the third or fourth should have gone wrong on something else? Let Christians dismiss from their minds the idea that there was a long period of pristine purity, and then a sudden influx of human innovations. In Paul's time the falling away had commenced, for the mystery for iniquity did already work.

CHAPTER II.

DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT REST ON TRADITION ?

This question is answered in the affirmative by Romanists and others, and should be carefully canvassed. Several statements of the claim for tradition will first be given; then the more elaborate one will be refuted.

Anglican writers differ as to the authentication of Scripture, as on so many other points, according as they are the spiritual progeny of the sixth or of the twentieth Article. Dr. Harold Browne, Bishop of Ely, proceeds mainly by historical testimony, as follows:

“The principle, then, which we assert, is this, that Christ gave authority to His Apostles to teach and to write, that He promised them infallible guidance, and that therefore all Apostolical writings are divinely inspired. We have only to inquire what writings were Apostolical; and for this purpose we have recourse to testimony, or, if the word be preferred, to tradition. The testimony or tradition of the primitive Church is the ground on which the Fathers themselves received the books of the New Testament as Apostolical; and, on the same ground, we receive them. We gladly add to this every weight which can be derived from internal evidence, or from the authority of early councils; for we know, that no argument should be neglected which may fairly confirm our faith. But the first ground on which we receive the New Testament is, that it can be proved to have come from the pens or the dictation of the Apostles of Christ, and that to those Apostles Christ promised infallibility in matters of faith.”*

But Dr. Browne's American Editor, Bishop Williams, referring to the promises of Divine assistance quoted by Dr. Browne, says:

"But these do not seem to have been made exclusively to the original Apostles, nor to have been fulfilled, as far as writing Holy Scripture is concerned, in all of them. For not all of them contributed to the New Testament, and much of what it contains was written neither by them nor under their guidance, as the Epistles of St. Paul. We are therefore obliged to add that the *testimony* upon which we receive certain books as inspired, is that of the early Church, which by a divinely-guided discrimination accepted what was, and rejected what was not, written by virtue and in fulfillment of those promises; and that discrimination was based upon evidence part of which is still accessible and can be appreciated by us."*

Precisely what Bishop Williams means by "a divinely-guided discrimination," may be disputed. It is safe to say, however, that he means more than the historical witness of the Church; in fact, that he builds on her authority.

But we must pass to the Catholic view of the subject.

Kernan asserts that "Protestants have no real certainty as to the canon of Scripture * * * because they profess to believe nothing but what is expressly laid down in Scripture;" while the "Scripture does not tell us what books are canonical, that is, what and how many books are God's Divine word." He also asserts "that no prudent man can have any confidence in a Protestant Bible, since he can never be certain that it is properly translated." He then says, "Catholics are perfectly certain as regards both points," since "the Church points out the books that are canonical, and the correct versions of these books."†

Bossuet, after declaring that "the Church has been established by the power and wisdom of its sacred Author, in order to be the guide of Christian faith, the director of Christian piety, the guardian of the Scriptures, and the

* *Exposition of the Articles*, p. 192, Note.

† *Doctrinal Catechism*, 75-80.

preserver of tradition," affirms: "We, therefore, receive from her hands these holy writings, which we reverence as canonical;" and adds: "I am even convinced, spite of the contrary assertion, that it is her authority, principally, that induces the Protestant himself to receive as inspired several portions of the Holy Volume." He instances the Song of Solomon, the Epistles of James and of Jude as examples of books that the Protestants receive on Church authority. Bossuet then affirms: "It cannot be upon any other authority, in reality, that the Protestant receives as inspired the whole body of the Sacred Scriptures;" adding: "For it is his custom to reverence these, even before their perusal has convinced him that the Spirit of God is infused into them."*

In his "Lectures on the Doctrines and Practices of the Church," Cardinal Wiseman, after an attempted refutation of the Protestant method of authenticating Scripture, gives an elaborate account of the Roman method. He proclaims the loyalty of the Roman Church to the Word of God, asserts that she has a greater interest in maintaining, preserving, and exhibiting this Word than any body else, and declares "that when the Church claims authority, it is on the Holy Scriptures that she grounds it.†" Having made this profession of loyalty, he sets forth the Roman method of proving the Bible. Apparently, he does so with a semi-consciousness that his reasoning is fallacious. His argument can be summarized thus:

1. "We take up the Gospels and submit them to examination;" "we look at them simply as historical works;" "we find * * that to these works, whether considered in their substance or their form, are attached all those notions of human credibility which we can possibly require." Besides, he says "we find a body of external

* *Exposition*, pp. 208, 9.

† Vol. I, p. 53.

testimony sufficient to satisfy us that these are documents produced at the time when they profess to have been written, and that those persons were their authors whose names they bear." "As these were eye-witnesses of what they relate, and give us, in their lives and character, the strongest security of their veracity, we conclude all that they have recorded to be certain and true."

2. These Gospels tell us of "One who wrought the most stupendous miracles to establish and confirm the divinity of His mission." "In other words, we are led by the simple principle of human investigation to an acknowledgment of Christ's right to teach, as one who came from God; and we are thus led to the necessity of yielding implicit credence to whatever we find Him to have taught. So far, the investigation, being one of outward and visible facts, cannot require anything more than simple historical or human evidence."

3. "Having once thus established the Divine authority of Christ, we naturally inquire, what is it that Christ taught?" He taught "certain general principles of morality," as well as "made man acquainted with his own fallen nature and with his future destiny;" and, "moreover, He took means to preserve the doctrinal communications to mankind." As "He intended His religion to be something permanent, something commensurate with the existence of those wants of humanity which He came to relieve," "we naturally ask, in what way the obligations which He came to enforce, and the truths which He suffered to seal, were to be preserved, and what the place wherein they were to be deposited?" The answer is this: Christ "selects a certain body of men; He invests them with power equal to His own; He makes them a promise of remaining with them, and teaching among them, even to the end of time."

These men, thus chosen and empowered, constitute the "institution for the preservation of those doctrines, and the perpetuation of those blessings, which our Saviour thus communicated." This body of persons, together with their successors, "having the guarantee of Christ teaching among them forever, is what he calls the Church." Thus far the inquiry has proceeded "by mere historical reasoning, such as would guide an infidel to believe in Christ's superior mission."

4. But now, the inquirer is said to be in possession of "an assurance of Divine authority, and, in the whole remaining investigation, has no need to turn back by calling in once more the evidence of man." That is, he is now guided by the Church teaching with authority. This Divine organization "immediately takes on itself the office of teaching, and informs him [the inquirer] that the Sacred Volume which he had been hitherto treating as a mere history * * is a book which commands a much greater degree of respect and attention than any human motives could possibly bestow. For now the Church stands forth with that authority wherewith she is invested by Christ, and proclaims: 'Under that guarantee of Divine assistance which the words of Christ, in whom you believe, have given me, I proclaim that this Book contains the revealed Word of God, and is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that it contains all that has a right to enter into the sacred collection.' And thus the Catholic at length arrives, on the authority of the Church, at these two important doctrines of the canon and the inspiration of Scripture."*

Here is the semblance of argument, at least. The Cardinal does not simply say, "Accept the Bible as the Word of God because the Church says you must." Before subject-

* *Doctrines of the Church*, vol. I., pp. 64-7, *passim*.

ing his reasoning to criticism, it will be well to restate it in a briefer form: Historical proof establishes the truth of the Gospels; the miracles of the Gospels establish Christ's Divinity; Christ founds the Church and clothes her with infallible authority; the Church declares not only that the Gospels, but the other Scriptures as well, are inspired and holy books; and men receive them on her testimony. To what objection is this specious reasoning open?

First: it moves in a circle; it is equivalent to saying, Scripture first authenticates the Church, and then the Church authenticates Scripture. In vain Cardinal Wiseman struggles to show that this fallacy is not involved in his argument. He says, for example, an ambassador from one government to another is received on the strength of credentials that he himself bears and presents; "he himself first presents that document whereby alone his mission and authority are subsequently established." Granting that the cases are analogous, what are the points of resemblance? The Church is the ambassador, and the Scriptures are the credentials. An ambassador is indeed authenticated by credentials that he bears himself, but he does not authenticate his own credentials. His credentials validate themselves. The signatures of the officers of State who gave him his commission, together with the great seal, are evidences of their genuineness. He can add nothing to his credentials. They never become in any sense an act of his own; he imparts to them no new quality; they are not received on his testimony to their sufficiency; he bears them, gets his authority from them, acts under them, but never says to the State which has received him that the papers are genuine. Freely grant the Cardinal his illustration, and it reacts upon him and his cause. We may call the Scriptures the credentials of the Church; we may concede that, in a sense, the Church

is their bearer: but that the Church can add anything to their authority is not only false in fact, but fallacious in logic. Until an ambassador adds some new quality to his own commission, the Cardinal can get no help from this illustration. But he uses another illustration that is not more fortunate. He says a citizen reveres the laws of his country, on the authority of the legislature that enacts them. This is true; a legislature may certify its own enactments. But the Cardinal asks: "And whence does that legislature derive its jurisdiction and power to make those laws?" and answers: "Why, from that very code, from those very statutes which it sanctions." Here it may be denied that the Church, in any leading feature, is like a legislature. But waiving this point, it will be more to the purpose to deny that a legislature gets the power to legislate from its own legislation. There is always something back of the legislature: the will of the monarch in a despotism; some conventional act or acts, resting at last on the popular will, in a constitutional monarchy like England; a constitution, in a republic like the United States. A legislature such as Cardinal Wiseman assumes would be an usurpation; and therefore, perhaps, the better symbol of the Roman Catholic Church. The one illustration requires that an ambassador shall validate his own commission; the other that a legislature shall be its own authority. No artifices of logic can save either the Roman method of evangelization or of authenticating the Scriptures, from the charge of moving in this circle. Scripture authenticates the Church, and the Church confirms Scripture! The priest invites the infidel to enter the Church, and gives as a reason that the Church tells him to do so. The Roman theory is a house without a foundation, hanging in mid-air; a tremendous demand on the credulity of men. An Anglican writer, one who had much better

be in the Catholic fold, speaks derisively of what he calls "the worn-out sophisms of the Bible and the 'Bible only theory,' as though the world could stand on the tortoise and the tortoise stand upon space."* But the tortoise standing upon space is the proper symbol of the Catholic and High Anglican theory. Rather, the latter theory is this: The world on the tortoise, and the tortoise on the world!

Second: the interpolation of the Church into the Cardinal's argument is wholly superfluous. It cannot add anything to its force. The Gospels, as books of ordinary historic verity, authenticate the Church, it is said; and then the Church proclaims that they are inspired—a thing that can never be known without her signature. That is, historic testimony can authenticate a Church that can proclaim certain books inspired, but it cannot authenticate inspiration. To be sure, the Cardinal, as though he caught a glimpse of the circle in which he moves, says: "We do not believe the Church on the authority of Scripture, properly so called; we believe it on the authority of Christ." But as we have no knowledge of Christ save what we get from Scripture, and as our certainty, up to the moment of the Church's proclaiming the Gospels inspired, rests on historic testimony, this plea does not mend the matter. The argument demands that a chain shall be stronger than its weakest link—that a stream shall rise above its source.

But, again, the Cardinal says: "We are led by the simple principle of human investigation to an acknowledgment of the authority of Christ to teach as one who came from God." What can the Church do for us more? Can certainty rise higher than this? He goes farther: "We

*H. N. Oxenham. See his Preface, p. xiv., to Dollinger's *Reunion of the Churches*, New York, 1872.

are thus led," that is by human investigation, "to the necessity of yielding implicit credence to whatever we find Him to have taught." Can tradition or the authority of the Church strengthen such a faith? Once more, he describes the Scriptures "as a book manifesting to us one furnished with Divine authority to lay down the law." What firmer foundation can there be for our faith? So far as the Gospels, at least, are concerned, we have no need of the Church (in the Roman sense); for when the history and teaching of Christ are received as worthy of "implicit credence," nothing remains to be added. But it may be said, implicit credence, in the Cardinal's sense, does not include inspiration. But if human testimony can assure us that Christ is Divine and a Saviour, what need of stronger assurance? What stronger can there be? Besides, if the Gospels are not inspired (to the mind of the inquirer) when he asks the Church how he is to regard them, they cannot be when she has answered; since inspired testimony is as much needed to authenticate a church as to authenticate a book.

But so far we have been dealing with the Gospels; what of the other books of the New Testament? While human testimony may suffice for the Gospels, do we not need the authority of the Church in the cases of the other writings? Before replying to this question, let it be noted that Cardinal Wiseman says nothing about human testimony in the case of these books, though it is not presumable that he intended to leave the impression that no such testimony exists. In fact, there is no difference in the two cases; all the books rest on testimony. What the real method of proving Scripture is, will be shown in the next chapter. Here let it be remarked once more, Church authority can add nothing to the testimony showing that these books are divinely revealed.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT IS AUTHENTICATED.

Cardinal Wiseman's method would be unobjectionable if he would leave out the authority of the Church. The following propositions, which are stated without illustration, will be found to cover all the ground:

1. By historical evidence, we prove the Gospels to be genuine books; that is, we show that they were written by those men whose names they bear.

2. The contents of these books, together with the character of the writers, their opportunities for knowledge, the severe tests to which they were subjected, prove the books to be true and authentic.

This is all on the principle of human, historic testimony.

3. Hence, on the strength of testimony, we accept the teachings and miracles of Jesus. These teachings and miracles prove His Divine mission. "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."* Hence He is to be followed.

4. Jesus promised inspiration to his Apostles (John xiv, 25, 6; John xvi, 13; Mark xiii, 11; Matt. xxviii, 20). This inspiration they claimed to receive.

5. Whatever, therefore, the Apostles said or wrote when acting under this commission was inspired.

* John, iii, 2.

6. What they did write, must be determined by the simple principle of human investigation—human, historical testimony.

7. Paul also was chosen an Apostle, and clothed with the proper authority. This choice and endowment validate his writings; what his writings are, must be made out, as in the other cases, by testimony.

8. Mark wrote his Gospel at the dictation of Peter, and Luke his at the dictation of Paul. Both of these propositions rest on ancient evidence. Luke, we prove in the same way, wrote the Acts, and the most of it from personal knowledge.

Only the method of proof is here given; for the real evidence, the reader must consult the appropriate works. It is such as the following: Manuscripts in the original, versions in numerous languages, catalogues of the Sacred Books, quotations and references in ancient writings, commentaries, statements and allusions of secular writers. This external objective evidence is supported by internal evidence. In the words of Bishop Burnet: "The authority of those books is not derived from any judgment that the Church made concerning them; but from this, that it was known that they were writ, either by men who were themselves the Apostles of Christ, or by those who were their assistants and companions, at whose order, or under whose direction and approbation, it was known they were written and published."* But it will be asked, Are we not dependent on the Church for these sources of evidence? And if so, are we not shut up to Church authority? These questions call for careful answers.

The historical proofs of Christianity may be divided into two classes, the Christian, and the anti-Christian. The former are much the more abundant, and, in the aggre-

* *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, Art. VI.

gate, much the more valuable. At the same time, they do not differ in nature from the latter. A quotation from one of the Sacred Books, or a reference to one of them, found in Celsus or Porphyry, is just as valuable (some would say more valuable) for our purpose as the same quotation or reference found in Irenæus or Clement. In so far, then, as the evidence comes to us from heathen sources, it cannot be claimed that it rests on the authority of the Church. But it will be said, most of the evidence belongs to the other category. This is true, and hence we must consider its relations to the Church. Says the Bishop of Ely:

“That evidence is principally dependent on *testimony*, but is not resolvable into mere *authority*. It is *the witness* of the Church, not merely its sanction, to which we appeal. Now the position of the Church in its earliest ages was such, that its witness on this subject is singularly unexceptionable. During the very life times of the Apostles, it had spread through the civilized world. Europe, Asia, Africa, had all heard the voice of the Apostles, and all had flourishing churches long before the death of the last of that sacred body. The books which the Apostles had written were, therefore, not merely to be found in one or two obscure corners of the world, but they were treasured up and read and revered in Rome and Alexandria, in Antioch and Ephesus, in Corinth and Thessalonica, very probably in Spain and Gaul and Arabia, perhaps even in the remote region of Britain itself. There were, therefore, witnesses in every corner of the globe. Even where the arms of Rome had not carried conquest, the feet of Apostles had carried good tidings of peace. In many of these churches, the writers of the Sacred Books were well-known and constant visitors; so that Epistles as from them, or Gospels with their names, could not have been palmed off upon their converts, who could continually have rectified errors of this kind by direct appeal to the living sources of Divine instruction. The writers of the New Testament themselves took care that what they wrote should be widely circulated, and extensively known, when first they wrote it.”* [Col., iv., 16; I. Thess., v., 27.]

Now the phrase “witness of the Church” used by the learned Bishop is, or is not, misleading, according as it is understood. If by the Church is meant the members of

* *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, pp. 168-9.

the Church as individuals, if by "the witness of the Church" is signified the witness of those early Christians who testified to their religion, in the books that they wrote, the words that they spoke, or in the sufferings that they endured, the phrase is unobjectionable. Such a view makes the testimony or *witness* an individual matter; it bases the facts of Christianity on the testimony of witnesses. In this way, Paul appeals to testimony to prove the resurrection of Christ. The risen Lord was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve, next by above five hundred brethren at once, afterwards by James, once more by all the Apostles, and last of all he was seen by Paul also, as one born out of due time.* But if we are to understand by the phrase the Church collectively, an ecclesiastical corporation or hierarchy, especially if we are to understand the *authority* or inspiration of the Church, then the phrase is not only misleading, but false. When given statements purporting to be facts are made, it is not enough to be told that they are believed by the majority, or even by all, of the community; one must have particular persons pointed out to him, worthy of credit, who are responsible for the statements. Hence, we must reject any theory of Christian evidence that sinks the individuality of the original witnesses in the *concensus* of the Christian body. In great part we receive the New Testament books on the testimony of witnesses found *in* the Church, but not on the *authority* of the Church. By holding that authority is the basis of Scripture, the individuality of the witnesses is lost sight of, and the strength of the argument is reduced. Infidel writers have been quick to catch at the claim of authority, and to turn it to their special uses; denying the sufficiency of the historical testimony to the books, and affirming that Christians received the books solely on the ground of au-

* I Cor., xv, 5-8.

thority. The more zealous and indiscreet advocates of tradition hold, that the New Testament canon was settled by the councils of the fourth century, and this allegation is caught up by infidels, who put it in this form: The canonicity of the New Testament books was settled by the ayes and noes of a parcel of bishops. Professed defenders of the faith should beware how they give their hands to its enemies. So far from the High-Church doctrine being a shield of the faith, as is continually asserted, its very claims of priestly prerogative and ecclesiastical authority are the most effective weapons of the sceptic. The quick intelligence of this age is not content to rest its faith on such authority.

But it may be asked, "Are we wholly independent of the Church, considered as an organization? Had not the Body of Christ some functions to perform in perpetuating the Gospel?" The consideration of these important questions will close this part of the discussion.

Through the ministry that she organized, the communities that she established, the intelligence that she created, the vigilance that she exercised, and the publicity that she gave to the Scriptures, the Church contributed powerfully to the Christian argument. It is true that the agents through which she acted were men, but these agents were much more efficient on account of their union in one body than they would have been as isolated individuals. In this way the disciples throughout the world worked together to perpetuate and authenticate the Scriptures, and to keep them incorrupt. Thus the Church was the pillar and ground of the truth. What is more, some weight may be properly attached to mere authority when it is properly limited and defined. The books were admitted to the Canon on grounds of evidence; and the fact that a certain book was received in

the second century by the great Christian body, is evidence that the testimony was thought sufficient to justify its admission. For example, no other book of the New Testament now rests on such slender historical evidence as Second Peter. Some of the original evidence to its authorship may have perished. At all events, its reception by the Christians of antiquity, who acted in view of all the light in their possession, furnishes presumptive proof of its genuineness. The decisions of the councils of the second and third centuries are worth no more than the evidence on which they rested; no element of infallibility entered into their decisions; we may fairly claim for them a certain judicial weight, but nothing more.

In confirming Scripture, a considerable importance may fairly be conceded to tradition. The oral Gospel preceded the written; the written was simply the oral put into a new and more permanent form. When the Gospels were written, the facts and teachings that they contained had been for a number of years in the possession of the Church. The Church was a living organism, growing out of those facts and teachings. The acceptance of these books by this community is its judgment that the written Gospel coincided with the oral. The same body that had approved the Gospel story as told, now approved it as written. The Epistles, most of them written before the Gospels, were addressed to persons already in possession of the Christian fundamentals. The principal doctrines and ordinances were established in the Church before the New Testament was written. Hence, the apologist of the second century could point to these ordinances and doctrines as they existed both in Scripture and in the Church. *Then* there was power in the appeal to tradition, as well as in the appeal to Scripture. By and by old doctrines were corrupted and new ones introduced; old rites were changed

and new ones adopted; that is, the stream of Church testimony began to grow muddy; and yet the fundamentals, both of doctrine and ordinance, remained: the ministry of Jesus, His death and resurrection, His divinity, salvation through His name, baptism, the supper, and the first day of the week. What is more, notwithstanding the fearful apostacies of the last eighteen hundred years, the lapses from primitive faith and practice, the great body of the Historic Church has preserved the central facts, commands, and promises of the Gospel. Within the pale of the great National Churches, the Greek and the Latin, not to mention the dissenting bodies, Christ has never been left without a witness. Such facts as these are entitled to very great weight in considering the historical basis of Christianity. Christ's religion has been transmitted in its purity in written books, in a corrupted state in a living channel. While no well-instructed Christian would go to the latter to find the pure water of life, he may trace that channel back to the original fountain. Or, while no such person would go to the Church to find his religion, he may point to that great historic monument to show that, for eighteen hundred years, that religion has existed among men. Again, say what the believer may about apostacies, say what the unbeliever may about ecclesiastical abuses, neither the one nor the other stands to Christianity in the relation that he would if there were no Historic Church. His present relation is this: he has not only the Bible but also an historic body, professing to give expression to the doctrines of the Bible. He might have the Bible, but find no trace of any such body. Grant that the original evidences were the same in both cases; exclude any objection that might arise from the failure of Christ's promises, who can claim that it would be as easy to authenticate the Scriptures without the Church as with the Church? In the

one instance, we have an ancient book, a relic of antiquity authenticated by certain testimony; in the other instance, the same book and the same testimony are brought down to us in the hands of a living organization, claiming to venerate the book, and certainly making some effort to be guided by its teachings. With all its shortcomings, the great Christian body is an important witness for Christ. Had the Church been true to her great mission, nay, were she now but united upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, her testimony would be irresistible.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE.

The Roman Catholic Church holds that the Church of the Apostles was divinely put in possession of the sense of Scripture, and that this sense has been handed onward by infallible tradition to the present time. After what has been already said concerning infallibility and Church inspiration, this specific claim need not be here refuted. But the so-called hermeneutical tradition is highly valued by many Christians who do not believe in Church infallibility, and this more moderate view does call for attention before the whole subject is dismissed. I shall first present two quotations from Anglican writers. The Bishop of Ely holds thus:

“Those early Christians who had the personal instruction of the Apostles and their immediate companions, are more likely to have known the truth of Christian doctrine than those of after ages, when heresies had become prevalent, when men had learned to wrest Scripture to destruction, and sects and parties had warped and biased men’s minds, so that they could not see clearly the true sense of Holy Writ. Truth is one, but error is multiform; and we know that in process of time new doctrines constantly sprang up in the Church, and by degrees gained footing and took root. We believe, therefore, that if we can learn what was the constant teaching of the primitive Christians, we shall be most likely to find the true sense of Scripture preserved in that teaching; and wherever we can trace the first rise of a doctrine, and so stamp it with novelty, the proof of its novelty will be the proof of its falsehood; for what could find no place among the earliest churches of Christ, can scarcely

have come from the Apostles of Christ, or from a right interpretation of the Scriptures which they wrote.”*

Dr. J. II. Blunt gives a moderate Anglican view of the same subject in the following passage:

“But the providential use of tradition has been principally that of preserving in the Church a true knowledge of Divine Revelation. Its office in the *preservation* of Holy Scripture has already been shown in the account given of the Sacred Books; and in *interpreting* it, in the account given of the Council of Nicæa. The great question of early days, when any controversy arose respecting the authenticity or the meaning of the Scriptures was, ‘What was believed by those who were nearest to the Apostles? and hence, what did the Apostles hand down in trust to the Church of after times?’ In this manner arose that which may be called the COMMON LAW of the Church; a traditional expression of the truth handed down from generation to generation, and eventually reported in the writings of those early Christian writers of whom an account will be given in the next section of this volume. They study the Bible very imperfectly indeed who despise this common law of the Church; and the more learned theologians are, the more they respect it as a guide to truth. And although nothing is absolutely binding upon the faith except that which is contained in the Holy Scripture, or may be proved thereby, there is often a moral weight in the traditions of the Church which gives them a great practical importance in the eye of the well-informed and truly rational Christian; and which inclines him to the opinion that he is safer in receiving them than in rejecting them.”†

These quotations contain unquestionable truth. The early Christians were more likely to know the truth of Christian doctrine than those of after ages; we *do* “know that in process of time new doctrines constantly sprang up in the Church;” and the proof of novelty was the proof of falsehood. The great question of early days was, as the question of these days should be, “What did the Apostles hand down in trust to the Church of after times?” Nor need we hesitate to concede that there is often “a moral weight in the traditions of the Church which gives them a great practical importance in the eye of the well-informed

* *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, p. 183.

† *Household Theology*, N. Y. and London, 1871, p. 159.

and truly rational Christian." Still the Anglican view, thus presented, requires considerable modification. I shall now seek to state, in the form of positive exposition, the truth of the matter.

We must grant that the oral form of the Evangelical Tradition was an aid to the primitive Christians in understanding the written form. Oral speech is more perspicuous and lively than written speech, especially where its substance has been many times repeated. The personal presence of the Apostles in the Church, and the presence of those intimately associated with them (say such men as Timothy and Titus), must have been of great advantage in enabling the disciples to get a firm hold of the Gospel. It is impossible that a written book could have been immediately so serviceable as these communications by the living voice. Hence, it was only when the Apostles were unable to communicate with individuals or churches in this way that they resorted to written epistles. Again, we may safely grant that the oral teaching of the Apostles was a key to their writings. The Church in Ephesus, for example, could understand the letter addressed to them all the better from the fact that Paul, in that city, "by the space of three years ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."* In so far as the Gospel took on an outward form, the primitive Christians had a still greater advantage; they *saw* and *heard* what was done by the Apostles or by their authority. To a certain extent, the Gospel was to them a matter of sense-perception, and not of verbal interpretation. For them there could be no controversy over baptism, nor could they be in doubt as to how often and to whom the Lord's Supper was administered. They saw the entire machinery of the Church in operation, and they knew its every part. No doubts hung over many

* Acts, xx, 31.

of the ecclesiastical questions that now perplex and divide the Christian world; for them these questions did not exist. They *knew* whether the bishop and the presbyter were the same officer; they knew in what relation the bishops stood to the Apostles, what were the duties of the evangelists, and whether there were lay-elders and deaconesses. They knew directly the meaning of the command that the bishop must be the husband of one wife; and they were not obliged to weigh delicate arguments to decide whether it meant that he should not be a polygamist, that he should be a monogamist, or something else. Undoubtedly the Corinthians knew certainly what Paul meant when he spoke of those which "are baptized for the dead," while we can only conjecture.* This face-to-face knowledge of the Apostolic Church was the peculiar blessing of the primitive Christians. It was to be esteemed all the more highly from the peculiar nature of the New Testament writings. The Epistles all the time assume the existence of the Gospel; they take the Church for granted. Hence, many things are never put in the form of statutes; they are stated indirectly and inferentially; and we should often be in hopeless confusion could we not supplement precept by example. Besides, considerable parts of the New Testament relate to the social and religious economy of the contemporary world, Jewish and heathen ideas, institutions, and customs. This economy was to the primitive Christians a living thing; they were a part of it; and they were not obliged to build it up in their thoughts, to call it out of the dead past, as we are, by slow research and a painful use of the historical imagination. They enjoyed the same great advantage in the case of the Church. These facts gave a vividness to the ideas of the primitive Christians, and a certainty to their knowl-

*I Cor., xv, 29.

edge, that is now beyond the reach of the most gifted geniuses. Now, it is claimed by the advocates of tradition that the more substantial of these advantages have been handed onward to our day. But that the claim has no foundation, can easily be shown.

Where has this knowledge been preserved? The answer is, In the Fathers. It is found, then, in books, a fact which shatters the argument at once. This is sending us to a second set of writings to find out what a first set mean. So far, then, in the very nature of the case we are cut off from the peculiar advantages that the primitive Christians enjoyed—the advantage of a face-to-face knowledge of the Apostolic Church. Tradition, then, as embodied in books, must be abandoned, so far as meeting the case is concerned. Still, it is proper to question antiquity as to any assistance that it can render us. Let us then take a glance at the Fathers.

The true mode of biblical interpretation is to follow the historico-grammatical sense. The grammatical sense of a word, phrase, or proposition, in the words of Dr. Muen-scher, is “that meaning which appears to be the natural, obvious, and customary meaning of the language, as ascertained from usage, irrespective of extrinsic considerations.” The historical sense “depends upon the age and country in which the writer lived, his education, temperament, style of writing, his religion and various surroundings, and the prevalent opinions, usages, and customs of the times.”* Thus, *Αἰών* grammatically means time or age; historically, a dispensation, as the Jewish or Christian. Melancthon was quite right in saying: “Scripture cannot be understood theologically, unless it is understood grammatically;” and Luther in saying: “The knowledge of the sense can be derived from nothing but the knowledge of the words.”

* *Manual of Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 101, 2.

In gaining a knowledge of this sense, we must be guided by those rules of interpretation which are sanctioned by experience. Nothing is to be expected that can throw light on the sacred text. In the words of Dr. Maasschot, * 'The Bible is the pale of truth, interpreted by all the lights we can bring to bear upon it.' Hence it is, that we derive advantage from those who are learned in the Hebrew and Greek languages, who are familiar with the principles of interpretation, who have studied the world in the midst of which the Church was planted, who have studied the Scriptures, and are in sympathy with them. Accordingly, the Fathers must aid us, if at all, not because they were inspired either individually or collectively, nor because they were men of great abilities, and of great opportunities for knowledge. The tradition of the Church has value, if it have any, not because it comes through an infallible channel, but because it exhibits a consensus of intelligent interpretation. When we have determined, therefore, what the abilities and opportunities of the Fathers were, we are in possession of the rule that must measure the aid that they can render us in understanding the Word of God. It should be noted, that in speaking of the opportunities of the Fathers, I include the advantages that they possessed in consequence of their nearness to the Apostles. As the object of this discussion is to fix a principle, and not to apply it, I am not called upon to give a careful estimate of the exegetical services rendered by the Fathers. But it will be useful to state some facts which will serve to keep our estimate of that service within proper limits :

1. As a class, the Fathers of the first six centuries were not what we would call learned men. Some of them were fair, two or three of them excellent, scholars. The most learned were Origen and Jerome. Origen, although a man

of great genius, learning, and industry, was fanciful in his turn of mind, and wedded to a vicious system of interpretation; while Jerome, having less genius but more balance, was a man of strong passions and bitter antipathies. He was the only man of his day, or for many centuries, who was qualified by his knowledge of the Hebrew language to translate the Old Testament into Latin.

2. Some of the Fathers were men of unstable minds, lacking in penetration and common sense. They often interpreted according to allegorical principles. Origen's work is thus described by Dr. Muenscher: "He pushed the allegorical mode of interpretation to a far greater and more dangerous extent than any of his predecessors. To the Scriptures he ascribed a three-fold sense, viz: the literal or grammatical, the moral, and the spiritual or mystical. To the first of these he attached very little value; but regarded the hidden or mystical sense as the only one worthy of regard. None but the most wild and visionary of the present day would regard him as a safe and judicious expositor of the Sacred Volume. Swedenborgians might adopt him as a guide, but not any one who places common sense above fancies and dreams."* Tradition rests heavily on the shoulders of Irenæus, but nothing would be easier than to show that he often entertained the most absurd views of Scripture.

3. The literary and critical apparatus necessary to equip an interpreter did not exist in the first six centuries; materials for comparing and verifying texts were not as accessible as they are now, nor was there any such thing as a developed science of criticism, in our sense.

4. The writings of these Fathers do not cover all the New Testament, much less the Old. For the most part, the ante-Nicene Fathers wrote apologetically and contro-

* *Manual of Biblical Interpretation*, p. 35.

versially, not exegetically; and their expositions of Scripture were generally incidental. The later Fathers produced more, and more valuable, exegetical writings. Still, Dr. Muenscher remarks: "The expository writings of the Fathers of the first six centuries cover only a comparatively small portion of the Sacred Volume. On some parts of the New Testament they are somewhat copious and valuable, especially those of Chrysostom; but on the Old they are very meagre, and, with the exception of Jerome, of little value. If we rely, therefore, upon them to enlighten us in regard to the true meaning of the Bible, we shall find ourselves in five cases out of six without a guide, and be compelled to pursue our way in the best manner we can in the exercise of our rational faculties."*

5. The Fathers constantly conflict with one another. No one can deny the truth of Chillingworth's celebrated charge: "There are Fathers against Fathers, and Fathers against themselves; a consent of Fathers of one age against a consent of Fathers of another age."

What can be more absurd, then, than to send the inquirer to the Fathers for the meaning of the Bible? In many respects, the patristic literature is the more difficult of interpretation. "Let the Scriptures be hard," says Milton, "are they more hard, more crabbed, more abstruse than the Fathers? He that cannot understand the sober, plain, unaffected style of the Scriptures will be ten times more puzzled with the knotty Africanisms, the pampered metaphors, the intricate and involved sentences of the Fathers." To be sure, tradition consists of the decisions of councils, as well as of the patristic writings; but these decisions only assert general doctrines, and do not expound Scripture. Besides, if we may follow Chillingworth, there are councils against councils, as well as Fathers against

* *Manual of Biblical Translation*, pp. 40, 1.

Fathers. And yet, confused and contradictory as are these materials, Romanists and advanced Anglicans would send us to antiquity for our knowledge of Christianity, because the Bible is so incomplete, obscure, and hard to be understood ! Especial value is supposed to attach to the hermeneutical writings of the ante-Nicene Fathers. In their behalf the maxim is quoted, "Contemporary interpretation is the best interpretation." It is said that the oral Gospel was fresh in their minds, and that they saw the Apostolic Church as its authors had left it. But they did not live before corruptions began, nor is there, strictly speaking, any contemporary interpretation of the New Testament. Other things being equal, their interpretations of Scripture would have great weight; but they are not equal. No scholar will deny that Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine were better interpreters than any who preceded them; but they all saw the opening of the fifth century. No one need hesitate to affirm, that the exegetical labors of the first six hundred years are inferior in value to those of the last half century. We have seen the Hebrew and Greek languages thoroughly studied, and their literature explored, a thorough critical apparatus provided, and antiquity, both Pagan and Christian, restored. Why, then, should we be sent to the Fathers to find out what the Bible means, rather than to the Bible itself ?

The Catholic and Tractarian say that tradition teaches Christianity. But Catholic authors do not rest their case solely on tradition as embodied in books, but assert that the Historic Church, the Catholic Church of to-day, is the Church of the Apostles. Their language is: "Here is the original, primitive, Mother Church, a living organism; her bishops are the successors of the Apostles; the living, oral Word of God has been handed down uncorrupted in her successions; and what she tenders you in point of doctrine,

morals, or polity is the same that was preached and practiced by the Apostles, so that you have, in effect, the face-to-face knowledge of the primitive believer." This is simply a re-assertion of the old and preposterous doctrine so often exploded. It is the old claim of the identity of the Church, of Apostolical succession, and of infallibility. Rome has had, according to her own showing, nearly three hundred pontiffs, and that no message can be transmitted through so long a line, uncorrupted, without a perpetual miracle, is plain upon the simple statement. But I need not, at this stage of the argument, turn back to refute once more the dogma of Church inspiration or Papal infallibility. The fact is, we have not, and cannot have, the face-to-face knowledge of the Gospel and the Church that the primitive Christians had. *That* was one of their especial blessings as primitive Christians. We have our full compensation, part of it in things that they sighed for but never enjoyed. There are Christian sects whose existence bears witness to the Gospel, and to the Church; they may be said to bear a living testimony; but this is solely because they are, at least by profession, built upon the Bible, and draw their doctrines and ordinances from the Bible. There is no ecclesiastical body existing whose testimony is worth a fig, in the peculiar Roman sense; that is, as the testimony of a living body, reaching back to the first age, and handing on the traditions delivered by the Apostles in the successions of her ministry.

The above view does not take from antiquity anything that properly belongs to it. Antiquity is a strong witness to Christianity, considered as a whole, but not to the interpretation of particular passages, or to the minor facts of history. The Catholic and the Tractarian say that tradition teaches Christianity, and that Scripture confirms the teaching; the true method is to go to the Bible for

religion, and then to history for such light as history can throw upon it. I hold that Apostolic baptism was immersion; history furnishes us with no trace of another mode until the middle of the third century, and shows that immersion was almost universal until the thirteenth. I hold that the New Testament presbyter and bishop were the same office-bearer; the Fathers use the terms interchangeably for a hundred years after the death of the Apostle John. I hold that Jesus is the Son of God, Divine; and when some one tells me that this doctrine is a corruption of an earlier faith, I reply by showing from history that such was the teaching of the Church all along. I find the Saviour washing his Apostles' feet, and the Apostles teaching the kiss of love; in doubt, on Scripture grounds, whether these were permanent ordinances of the Church, I search antiquity, and, finding no trace of them there, conclude such was not their purpose. I find that abstinence from things strangled and from blood was at one time enjoined on certain churches; but conclude, since there is no later trace of the prohibition, that it was not a perpetual statute. In this way, the history of the early Church possesses a peculiar value; the great doctrines and ordinances of the Gospel stand out in that history like pyramids on a level plain. What is more, the interpretation of language is largely dependent on authority. Use is the law of language; we can tell the meaning of a word only by finding out how it has been used; while for the historical sense we are wholly indebted to history. That a given passage found in any book has universally, or even generally, been understood in a given way, is a strong presumption that such is its meaning. There need be no hesitation, therefore, in conceding a certain weight to tradition, or rather to history, in determining the doctrines of Christianity. In fact, if the word tradition could be dropped,

and the word history substituted; if it could be wholly dissevered from an imaginary infallibility and from Divine authority; if it could be used for proof and illustration, and sifted as history is sifted for other purposes, then there would be less disposition to question its value. At the same time, most of the questions that history is asked to answer are questions that history has suggested; and it must be confessed that she does not answer them with such authority as to put an end to controversy. Dr. Blunt says we must go to tradition to find out "what was believed by those who were nearest to the Apostles." How much easier and safer to go to the Scriptures to find out what was believed and taught by the Apostles themselves !

CHAPTER V.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

In the Introduction to this Essay, the reader was cautioned not to miss the author's standpoint. It was said: "He is not writing of traditions, but of Tradition. Believers in tradition believe it to be an instrument of doctrine, an organ of teaching, a channel through which Divine communications have descended from Christ and the Apostles to our own times. This is the sense attached to the word throughout this essay. Sometimes particular traditions will be mentioned, though more for illustration than for any other purpose. Tradition as now described is itself a tradition, and the most important of all. Tradition is a tradition through which other traditions flow. Its own bases and authority are traditionary. But it is the object of this book to examine the channel of transmission, the conducting pipe through which traditions flow, and not the stream that the pipe carries. A discussion of tradition can thus be brought within narrow limits; but exhaustively to discuss *traditions* would require a library." The task here defined has now been finished. My Book has been devoted to The Origin and Early Growth of Tradition, to the Place that it holds in the Churches, and to its Value. Though far from claiming that the discussion has been exhaustive, or thinking that it will be universally

satisfactory so far as it goes, I shall still hope that light has been thrown on all these questions.

The reader has noticed that some points of chronology have been left undetermined and fluctuating. For instance, When did the Bible practically give way to the Church teaching by authority? When did the injunction, "Search the Scripture" make room for the injunction, "Obey the Church?" When did men first hold that Scripture was too obscure and defective for a rule of faith, and that tradition is an independent and coördinate source of Divine knowledge? The very nature of tradition and the history of its origin make it impossible to render definite answers. Tradition was an evolution. No man made it. It can hardly be said to have been made at all. It was a growth, and sprang out of the general consciousness of the Church. It sprang up silently and grew slowly; and the very men who had most to do with fostering it little knew what they were doing. Hence, the above questions can be answered only approximately. Still we have seen that, in the first age, the oral preaching was the only form of the Gospel; that, in the second and third ages, it ran side by side with Scripture; and that, in the ancient Church generally, tradition was treated with great respect. "During all the early centuries," says Dr. Hodge, "the distinction between Scripture and tradition was not so sharply drawn as it has been since in controversies between Romanists and Protestants, and especially since the decision of the Council of Trent." While the ancient Fathers made the Bible the rule of faith, it did not stand out before their minds, even the ablest of them, in the clear-cut way that it stands out before the Protestant mind to-day. We have seen how tradition grew in strength and in magnitude, until, at last, so far as the mass of believers was concerned, the Bible was a hidden book. Nor should it be

forgotten, that the barbarizing of the Western mind, the destruction of literature and of literary habits, by making the laity dependent upon the oral teaching of the clergy, contributed materially to this practical repudiation of Scripture.

Considerable space has been devoted to locating the great divisions of Christendom with respect to tradition: the Roman Catholic, the Greek, the Anglican, and the Protestant sects. This discussion need not be recapitulated. It has been made manifest that, of all the millions who profess the Christian name, the vast majority, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, theoretically or practically, concede a certain authority to ecclesiastical tradition. Nor should all authority be denied to it, as I have tried to say; the nature and the limits of that authority, I have also tried to fix. We cannot cut loose from the past; we must respect the historical development of doctrines, institutions, and societies; to assert the contrary is saying, in effect, that both the individual man and the human race must begin its mental existence anew every day. However, this fact plainly appeared as we went on with the discussion—that the Churches defer to tradition far beyond what is reasonable or safe; in what sense or way, need not be re-stated. We may wonder that Christian men should ever have gone so far as the Greek, much more the Latin, Christian has gone. But when we remember how tradition grew, how the mental habit which defers to it was cultivated, and was itself handed on as a part of tradition—how many and how strong were the forces tending to propagate it, and what a weak thing is the human mind, much of our wonder ceases. We must remember that Antiquity ever lifts her awful front above the present. The maxim, Whatever has come down to us is true, does not prevent innovations; but it makes the innovation sa-

cred so soon as it is made. Respect for antiquity is a division of the argument from authority; an argument that is legitimate within certain limits, but that, pressed beyond those limits, is most dangerous. It has been carried so far as to land Chinamen in the worship of their deceased ancestors. "Who are we," it is asked, "that we should presume to think that we know better than our fathers?" Mr. Fowler, the learned writer on Logic, justly says: "On many matters of fact, there can be no question that the belief of previous generations, when properly examined and sifted, must be accepted as final, inasmuch as they were contemporary with, or at least nearer than ourselves to, the original sources of information." He then says that, to infer from this just and limited deference the necessity of an indiscriminating submission to the opinions of our ancestors, would be an example of the fallacy of induction by simple enumeration. In some cases, however, he thinks the argument rests on these grounds:

"We reverence the opinions of the aged, because they have had more experience than we have had, and, therefore, surely, on the same principle, we ought to accept the opinions of our ancestors who lived in bygone generations. The point of resemblance is the fact of having been born at a period prior to ourselves, and hence it is inferred that the greater experience and greater wisdom which are found to be concomitants of this fact in the case of many of our senior contemporaries may also be presumed in the case of those who have long since been dead. It, of course, escapes the notice of those who have recourse to this argument, that the average age of the persons living at any one time is about the same as that of those living at any other, and that superior wisdom is the consequence, not of priority of birth, but of greater experience. Thus far, the fallacy may be regarded as one of false analogy, strictly so-called. But there is another consideration which turns the edge of the argument. Experience grows with time, each generation not only inheriting the accumulated experience of previous generations, but adding to the stock its own acquisitions. 'Recte enim,' says Bacon, 'veritas temporis filia dicitur, non auctoritatis. Antiquitas sæculi juvenus mundi.'"^{*}

^{*} *Inductive Logic*, pp. 308, 9.

But to point out the particular fallacies involved in the argument from antiquity, will be useful only to those who regard the opinions of the past *as* opinions, and the men of the past *as* men. It is idle thus to reason, hoping to convince men who believe in Church inspiration and the continuance of miracle. But, knowing the influence of antiquity over the human mind, as well as the sense of ease that authority gives, we can even understand how an occasional Protestant—a man of a given type of mental character—should surrender his soul to tradition. Protestantism is a stern religion. It gives a man the Bible, and tells him to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. It provides no ecclesiastical shelter behind which he is safe from his own spirit. It knocks from under him all ecclesiastical props, and leaves him to stand alone with the help of God. It takes him out of the innumerable company of priests, and leaves him in spiritual isolation, to solve the problem of his destiny. No priest, no hierarchy, no Church can save him. Protestantism, therefore, demands strength and intrepidity of soul. With Catholicism, the case is very different. In the words of Emile de Lavaleye, “The Reformed religion rests on a book, the Bible; the Protestant, therefore, must know how to read. * * Catholic worship, on the contrary, rests upon sacraments and certain practices, such as confessions, masses, sermons, which do not necessarily involve reading.”* The distinguished Belgian points out the bearing of these two kinds of religion upon general education and intelligence. Here only their connection with the present subject can be remarked upon. Rome says, in effect: “You need not read; attend my sacraments and masses, hear my sermons and do my practices. I am Holy Mother Church; with me are the chairs of

* *Protestantism and Catholicism.*

the Apostles, especially the chair of Blessed Peter. I am older than the New Testament; I am the pillar and the support of the truth; the Apostles, delivered to me the oral Gospel, and it has been handed down in the successions of my pastors, as well as in certain books; I am built upon the Rock; Christ is with me always, even to the end of the world; within my communion is faith and peace: come, debating, doubt-tossed, weary Protestant, lay aside your doctrine of the Bible and private judgment, cease to question and argue, come, and pillow your head upon my bosom and you will find rest!" To a resolute spirit the invitation is an insult, but to a certain kind of mind it is a godsend. Given a man whose intellect is receptive rather than creative, poetic rather than logical—a man disposed to trust rather than to question, of high susceptibility to the argument from antiquity—a man filled with solemn awe by the dim, religious light of a Gothic cathedral, trembling at sight of an old martyr's picture, doting on Madonnas, given to religious bric-a-brac, peculiarly responsive to the influence of the Holy Places, thinking it irreverent, if not sacrilegious, to speak of an Apostle without the prefix "Saint,"—given such a man as this, who has been taught, or who can be taught, to read the Bible through the patristic prisms, and, if he do not die in the communion of Mother Church, it will be either because no priest crosses his track, or on account of other accidental circumstance.

While I have sought in this book fairly to state the facts relating to the various subjects canvassed, I have not sought to disguise my own adherence to the Protestant principle. Still, I am far from claiming that Protestants have always been loyal to that principle, or that they have always understood it. On the other hand, I have pointed out how often they have, willingly or unwillingly, betrayed

their own doctrine. At the same time, historical Protestantism is a vast improvement on historical Catholicism. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Protestantism restored the Bible to men. It stirred the human mind, and aroused a spirit of inquiry. It has done most of the valuable work done the last three centuries to explain and illustrate the Bible. It has held up Scripture and private judgment as the true method of religion. It has not swept the ecclesiastical heavens of all the clouds that gathered in the ages of darkness, but these are disappearing before its breath. Besides, we can trace a constant, though slow, progress from the beginning. With many inconsistencies and much unfaithfulness, with some wanderings and turnings back, on the whole Protestantism has moved forward. Rising to an elevation higher than mere Protestantism, there can be no mistaking the grand religious movement of the last three centuries. Look for a moment at the Christianity of ten, five, or three centuries ago. What a mass of pagan superstitions and ecclesiastical traditions had overgrown the Gospel of Jesus! Compare the Christianity of the New Testament with that of the Church in the twelfth or fifteenth century. The one is clear, simple, consisting of few proper dogmas and few rites, free, easy of apprehension; the other is confused, complex, abounding in dogma and in ceremony, most burdensome to the mind and oppressive to the heart. If I may apply the description that M. Coquerel uses for another purpose, the latter is a "vast labyrinth," a "movable chaos." Such is the difference between the religion of Jesus and the religion of the Pope. Now, for centuries the grand religious movement has been from the labyrinthian chaos toward more light and freedom. With much absurdity and extravagance, the movement has been *from* tradition and human authority *toward* reason and Divine authority.

Mother Church has done her utmost to resist this progress; she has cursed it over and over again. Not content with cursing, she has brought to bear the whole power of her vast enginery. But in vain. Nature and History move on in their appointed order; the sun does not go back on the dial-plate. Rome's proclamation of the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility, her Syllabus and Vatican Council, her Sacred Hearts and Lourdes Pilgrimages cannot blind the eyes of the discerning to the direction in which the world-currents are sweeping. Certainly it is within the bounds of truth to say, never since the second century have superstition and tradition had so little real power in the Church as they have in the best portions of the Protestant world to-day. Nor do I forget the articles, canons, and rubrics that are still found in the symbolical books of the Churches. So effectually is the power of tradition broken, that some religious men are actually sweeping away too far, even disregarding Divine authority, and ignoring that unquestionable weight which the consensus of more than fifteen centuries yields to the great verities of New Testament religion. The time has fully come when a man may, without laying himself open to the charge of credulity, look forward to a day when the commandments of men shall no longer make void the law of God.

In this discussion, Tradition and Authority have often been used as synonymous, though the distinction between them as ecclesiastical terms has been pointed out. But there is a broader view of Authority than the ecclesiastical view, with which this book may properly close. It is, in general, the view presented by Mr. Gladstone in his Review of Sir G. C. Lewis's "Essay on the Influence of Au-

thority in Matters of Opinion," and in his "Rejoinder" to Sir James Stephen.*

To define knowledge, to distinguish its varieties, to point out all its sources, to state the difference between fact and truth, especially to discriminate between knowledge and opinion, knowledge and faith, and opinion and faith, particularly to determine the worth of opinion, and the extent to which faith is a safe guide, requires philosophical abilities of the highest order. Certainly a vast amount of knowledge and opinion, and not a little faith, rest on a basis of authority. In his "Elements of Rhetoric," Dr. Whately gives this one glance at the subject :

"It is manifest that the concurrent testimony, positive and negative, of several witnesses, when there can have been no concert, and especially where there is any rivalry or hostility between them, carries with it a weight independent of that which may belong to each of them considered separately. For though, in such a case each of the witnesses should be even considered as wholly undeserving of credit, still the chances might be incalculable against their all agreeing in the *same* falsehood. It is on this kind of testimony that the generality of mankind believe in the motions of the earth, and of the heavenly bodies, etc. Their belief is not the result of their own observations and calculations; nor yet again of their implicit reliance on the skill and the good faith of any one or more astronomers; but it rests on the agreement of many independent and rival astronomers, who want neither the ability nor the will to detect and expose each other's errors. It is on similar grounds, as Dr. Hinds has justly observed, that all men except about two or three in a million, believe in the existence and in the genuineness of manuscripts of ancient books, such as the Scriptures. It is not that they have themselves examined these; or, again (as some represent), that they rely implicitly on the good faith of those who profess to have done so; but they rely on the *concurrent and uncontradicted* testimony of all who have made, or who *might make*, the examination; both unbelievers, and believers of various hostile sects; any one of whom would be sure to seize any opportunity to expose the forgeries or errors of his opponents."

Mr. Gladstone holds that the word "authority" comes from the Latin *auctor*, from *augere*, meaning *to make to*

*Both papers are found in Mr. Gladstone's "*Gleanings of Past Years.*" Vol. III.

græc: the original sense of *authar* is "voucher, surety, witness"—"the proper idea is that of one who *adds*." "In strictness, this must be adding to what existed before, as the witness adds to the thing his testimony about the thing; a surety of his own liability to the liability of the principal." "An author comes between us and the facts or ideas, and adds to them a *tertium*, or ground of belief, in his own assurance to us respecting them." "And hence," he says, "we obtain the largest and clearest idea of 'authority,' as that which comes between us and an object, and in relation to us adds something to the object which is extrinsic to it, which is apart from any examination of it by ourselves, but which forms a motive, of greater or less weight, as the case may be, for belief or action respectively in their several spheres."

In the "Rejoinder," Mr. Gladstone thus defines the principle of authority: "That the mass and quality of prior assent to a proposition in some minds may be, without examination of the grounds, a legitimate ground of assent for other minds, in matters of knowledge, and in matters of voluntary action." Lewis defines it more tersely as "the influence which determines the belief without a comprehension of the proof." In the first paper, Sir George Lewis's more analytical definitions are thus presented:

"1. His inquiry has no reference to matters of fact, and these he defines as 'anything of which we obtain a conviction from our internal consciousness or any individual event or phenomenon which is the object of sensation.

"2. Disputed questions of fact pass into the region of matters of opinion. And more largely, matters of opinion are general propositions or theorems relating to laws of nature or mind, principles and rules of human conduct, future probabilities, deductions from hypotheses, and the like, about which a doubt may reasonably exist.

"3. Opinions may be entertained from compulsion, or from inducement of interest. These I should say may be conveniently called authority improper; but they rest upon authority proper, when embraced without reasoning, because others, believed or assumed to be competent, entertain them.

thority in Matters of Opinion," and in his "Rejoinder" to Sir James Stephen.*

To define knowledge, to distinguish its varieties, to point out all its sources, to state the difference between fact and truth, especially to discriminate between knowledge and opinion, knowledge and faith, and opinion and faith, particularly to determine the worth of opinion, and the extent to which faith is a safe guide, requires philosophical abilities of the highest order. Certainly a vast amount of knowledge and opinion, and not a little faith, rest on a basis of authority. In his "Elements of Rhetoric," Dr. Whately gives this one glance at the subject :

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ticed eye. In these matters we take into view the amount of attention given, the ability of the person, his responsibility, and his impartiality."

The foregoing general view of authority commands the assent of the thinking mind. But Sir G. C. Lewis denies the applicability of the principle of authority to questions of religion, but so qualifies the denial as to destroy, virtually, its force. "At least it is only applicable to it," he says, "within certain limits." Certainly there are limits to its application here, as elsewhere; whether narrower or wider limits than elsewhere, we need not attempt to answer. Sir George's statement, as Mr. Gladstone presents it, is this:

"1. The consent of mankind binds us in reason to acknowledge the being of God.

"2. The consent of civilized mankind similarly binds us to the acceptance of Christianity.

"3. The details of Christianity are contested; but in doubtful questions the Church, and, *e. g.*, the Church of England at large with respect to its own members, is more competent than they are individually; and the business and duty of a reasonable man, so far as in these matters he is bound to have an opinion, is to follow the best opinion."

Mr. Gladstone then discusses these propositions at length, limiting the application of the third one, and extending the sphere of the two others. He holds that authority may really authenticate the doctrine of Revelation, the use of Sacraments, the Christian Ethics, the Creed (meaning the Apostles' Creed as expanded in the Nicene), the Trinity, and the Incarnation. What he means, if I understand him, is this: Men may accept these things because the whole civilized, or authoritative, world has also agreed to accept them. In a way, this is resting religion on authority, but not on authority in the Roman sense. Mr. Gladstone holds no more than that men who have not the ability or the time to inquire, may accept doctrines and rules because men who have inquired accept them. He rests on "the whole civilized, authorita-

tive world," not on an infallible Church. He does not deny or discourage inquiry, but calls it the "truly royal road" to truth. His view is, then, far higher, wider, and stronger than the Roman view. He would carry his general doctrine of authority into religion, and that doctrine he states once more, thus:

"Be it observed, then, that authority claims a legitimate place in the province of opinion, not as a bar to truth but as a guarantee for it; not as an absolute guarantee, but only when it is the best that may be had; not in preference to personal inquiry reaching up to the sources, but as the proper substitute in the multitude of instances where this is impracticable. Authority, rightly understood, has a substantial meaning; in that meaning, it is not at variance or in competition either with truth, or with private inquiry, and private judgment. It is a crutch, rather than a leg; but the natural energy of the leg is limited, and when the leg cannot work the crutch may."

Sir James Stephen attempted to show that Mr. Gladstone did not fairly represent Sir George Lewis's views, and Mr. Gladstone replied, defending what he had written; but into that controversy I should not enter, even if I had made proper preparation to do so. But I do insist that Mr. Gladstone's view contains unquestionable truth; how much, will be a matter of controversy. In our age inquiry is the theme of constant eulogy, authority of constant detraction; there is continual harping upon the assumed antagonism of authority and reason, authority and truth; and it is, therefore, not impertinent to say, what some seem to have forgotten, that authority has an indisputable place, and a high place, too, though not so high as the place of inquiry, in the Temple of Truth. It seems to me that Mr. Gladstone claims too much for authority in religion. However, without criticising his propositions one by one, I shall go on to state my own conclusions.

1. All will agree that the common rule for settling the *onus probandi* applies here: whatever, for the time, holds the ground has the logical presumption in its favor. That

a religion is generally received within considerable limits, is presumptive evidence that it contains some truth; or that an institution, as a government, exists, raises the presumption that it is, on the whole, useful. This much can be said for Mohammedanism in Arabia, or for absolutism in Russia. Hence, the past and present prevalence of Christianity in the civilized world is a conclusive reason why those who reject it, should take the affirmative and show why they differ from the majority. Since the conversion of the Roman Empire, the Christian apologist has the advantage of holding the ground.

2. But in this case the presumption is vastly more than a mere arbitrary rule for determining which of two disputants shall take the affirmative, and which the negative, in a debate. The logical presumption often has an authority behind it, that can be urged as argument in the debate itself. The unanimous suffrage of mankind may fairly be said to settle any question, and the nearer to unanimity the suffrage is the greater is its authority. But there is more in the matter than mere numbers. This authority is stronger or weaker according as it springs from the assent of those who stand high or low in the scale of human life. One hundred intelligent Christians fairly outweigh a million degraded Pagans. Thrown into the balance with New England, China kicks the beam. Sir G. C. Lewis actually "finds that we may justly confine the field of discussion [as respects authority in the widest sense] to the civilized nations of Europe, with the Greeks at the head, and the Romans as their pupils following them." "He excludes," says Mr. Gladstone, "not only barbarians, but Chinese, Hindoos, Persians, and Turks, on the ground of their want of progress in political institutions and scientific knowledge, from the suffrage, so to speak, or the title to count in that consent that makes up authority." Now, if Chinese, Hindoos, Persians, and Turks are to be excluded from

the consent of nations as respects science, philosophy, and political life, I can but think that they should, for the stronger reason, be excluded as respects religion. Further, when we remember that the ground was fully pre-occupied when the Gospel was given, that it made its way in the face of the most determined opposition, that slowly the most enlightened peoples of the old world abandoned Paganism and embraced Christianity, that for centuries it has been the religion of the most, in fact of the only, progressive nations, that to-day civilization and Christendom are really conterminous, that the Gospel has been received by the greatest minds of the modern world,—when we remember these things, the argument from authority becomes singularly strong and impressive. For an unbeliever to say to a believer, “Your acceptance of the Gospel is no reason why I should accept it,” is not a statement of the argument. A believer’s acceptance of the Gospel is, indeed, no basis for an infidel’s faith; but it may be a reason why he should look into the matter for himself. Much more is it a reason where the acceptance is the acceptance of the Christian world. I do not hold that authority makes it the duty of a man to embrace the Gospel, but do hold that it makes it his duty to treat it with moral seriousness. To condemn the religion of France, Germany, England, and the United States, far as it comes from being the religion of the New Testament, argues greater shallowness or frivolousness of mind than it would to sneer at the philosophy of Greece or the jurisprudence of Rome. Among the arguments, then, that may legitimately be urged in favor of Christianity is the one that springs from the Christian *consensus* of fifteen hundred years. And this I say remembering the incalculable mischief that has been wrought in the world by the principle of authority.

But strong and impressive as the argument from authority unquestionably is, and however it may answer the purposes

of action, it does not pertain to the foundation of the Gospel, and can never satisfy an inquiring mind. When the Apostle Peter commanded the disciples, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you,"* he did not in the remotest hint at the argument from authority, either in the Roman sense, or in any other sense. He referred, rather, to the great verities of the Christian faith. Hence it will be well to look again, and from a different angle, at the ground passed over in the chapter on authenticating the New Testament.

The Gospel contains a variety of elements. There are (1) The strictly moral teachings; (2) The proper dogmatic teachings, as Christ's pre-existence, divinity, and atonement; (3) The positive ordinances, as baptism; and (4) supernatural facts. The moral precepts are true in themselves, and carry their own proof and sanction; the proper dogmas and positive ordinances rest on authority; and the facts are proved by testimony. As respects the dogmatic and positive elements, the soul walks by faith. Man's guide here is the authority of God. But how is this authority certified to him? I answer, it is certified by the supernatural facts. Miracle is the (or *a*) seal of Divine authority. Accordingly, Christians may be divided into two classes—a small and a large class. The small class consists of those who were the original eye-witnesses of the facts; those who could say with Christ, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen;"† or with John, that they "declared" "that which was from the beginning" which they had heard, which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and their hands had handled of the word of life.‡ This personal, face-to-face knowledge of the verities of Christian-

* I Peter, iii., 15.

† John iii., 11.

‡ I John, i., 1-3.

ity, furnishing the basis of Divine authority, was the peculiar and precious possession of a small number of persons in that age. All others of that age who received the facts of the Gospel, received them on authority, that is, the testimony of witnesses. They were one step removed from the facts. All subsequent ages stand in a different relation; they receive them on written, not on oral authority, and they are one step further off. Mr. Gladstone well says: "For whatever Revelation and Inspiration may be, we of this day do not claim to be in the condition of these immediate receivers. The mode of our own personal access to what they have conveyed, must be considered as subject to the general laws which govern the acquisition of knowledge and the direction of conduct." No man now living can have so direct and simple a knowledge of religion as those to whom the Divine communication was directly made. With them, authority was absolute, and lay between God and man; with us, it is only relative, and lies between God and us by the *way of men*, that is, the witnesses. For us, therefore, the problem of Divine authority is more complex; a new factor has been introduced. So far from receiving the communication directly into our minds, or from the lips of an oral witness, we must verify manuscripts and identify books. Upon the whole, the method of authenticating the Gospel may not be more difficult now than then, but it is certainly different. With us, an examination of Christianity is, primarily, an inquiry into the claims of the New Testament to historical authenticity.

There are, then, two elements of authority in a man's reception of the Gospel: first, the authority of God, the Author of the Gospel; and, second, the authority of the witnesses upon whose testimony the facts, such as the original verity of the miracles and the genuineness and authenticity of the books, rest. The authority of the witness is just as necessary as the authority of God. So much is in-

disputable. But there is, in a great number of cases, a third element of authority, that, practically, is equally important. The New Testament says: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."* "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." This is the ideal of Christian training. But to suppose that all Christians attain to this lofty height—to suppose that they ever have, since the Gospel passed beyond the little circle formed by the first disciples, would be to commit a great mistake. How faint the outline of Christian evidence that millions of Christians would draw! How little do they know directly of the genuineness of books, of the sufficiency of evidence, or of the rules of criticism! Plainly, they cannot give an historical answer to the man who demands a reason for their faith. Nor am I speaking here simply of those Christians who are ignorant and superstitious, such as the mass of the Greek and Latin Churches, who take their religion on the authority of the priest; I refer especially to that large class of so-called intelligent men and women who, owing to want of ability, opportunity, or inclination, have either no knowledge or small knowledge of Christian evidences. On what basis does the faith of these people rest? In so far as it is historical, it plainly rests on authority—the authority of men. Sometimes, too, it rests on the authority of a small number of men. It is not too much to say, that there are cases where the historical elements, as respects books and criticism, are taken on the authority of the evangelist. Often the Bible is barely opened. The foundations of the Church are now sometimes laid in men's hearts upon the authority of preaching. But much more frequently, of course, it is the case that the faith of

* I. Thes., v., 21.

these people rests upon the general agreement of scholars as to certain facts, or upon the *consensus* of the Christian world. Dr. Hinds was not far from the truth when he observed, that all men, except two or three in a million, believe in the existence and in the genuineness of manuscripts of ancient books, such as the Scriptures, because they rely on the concurrent and uncontradicted testimony of all who have made, or who may make, the examination. It is quite true, too, that the popular knowledge of many other subjects rests on a similar basis, as Dr. Whately says.

Hence, we see that two elements of authority *must* enter into Christian faith, and that a third *may* enter. Now the question arises, "What is a faith worth that rests on the conclusions of a few scholars, or the Christian *consensus*, and is, therefore, traditionary?" This is a question that should be carefully scrutinized; all the more carefully because it is the fashion to decry tradition, to condemn authority, to cover with insult traditionary systems, to sneer at "blind faith," as well as to exalt positive knowledge and to eulogize inquiry. An intelligent skepticism is said to be far better than submission to authority.

"There is more faith in honest doubt,
Than in half the creeds."

Far be it from me to undervalue positive knowledge, or to belittle personal investigation. Authority, at best, is but a crutch or carriage, as Mr. Gladstone says; while inquiry, in three centuries, has changed the face of the intellectual world. But whether active skepticism is better than unreasoning faith, depends upon what is the subject matter. "*Apart from practice*," it has been said, "a waking error is better than a sleeping truth." With the qualification, we may accept the remark. *Apart from practice* it may be; but *with practice*, a truth, even when asleep, cannot be compared to an error of any kind,

least of all a waking error. The sleepier a truth the less its value, and the more wakeful an error the more dangerous. A blind faith can never be compared with an intelligent faith; and whenever doctrine is causally connected with morals, character, or practical life, the man had far better receive it on authority than not to receive it at all. Says Malebranche: "If I held truth captive in my hand, I should open my hand and let it fly, in order that I might again pursue and capture it." Says Lessing: "Did the Almighty, holding in His right hand *Truth*, and in His left *Search after Truth*, deign to tender me the one I might prefer,—in all humility, but without hesitation, I should request, *Search after Truth*." Says Sir William Hamilton: "Science is a chase, and in the chase the pursuit is always of greater value than the game." But these bold utterances can be true only in the field of pure speculation, where doctrine and life are wholly divorced. Their reception in the field of practice, where doctrine and conduct are causally connected, would be most pernicious. I do not say that the reception of sound principles, in morals or religion, ignorantly, on authority, is equally valuable with their intelligent reception; but that they had better be received thus than not at all. In so far as possible, sound doctrine should be made to stand wholly on a basis of reason and of evidence; but it had better stand on a basis of authority and tradition than to tumble down.

The conclusion just announced will hardly be disputed. But the question arises, How far is it applicable to the Christian religion? First of all, let it be distinctly understood that I am not here considering the distinctive theologies of the schools. I throw out the whole body of speculative divinity, as having little or no connection with life and godliness. Dogmas count for less, practically, than those who hold them think. Even the doctrine of tradition, though both false and dangerous, is not necessarily

related to conduct. Other things than denominational dogmas being equal, I see little, if any, difference in the virtues of the Protestant sects. But the Christianity of the New Testament—the common salvation—is undeniably and positively connected with the welfare of men. Wrapped up in that religion, are the destinies of mankind. The Bible is the Book of Conduct. It is, therefore, fortunate that its great doctrines are supported by the common consent of so many nations and so many centuries. No doubt tradition tends to beget indolence and dogmatism; no doubt men much better understand what is fully discussed than what is handed along by authority; but we had better put up with some sleepiness and dogmatism than to tear up our moral and religious foundations every generation or year, and begin again the structure of opinion and of faith. So holding, I can but think it important to keep the *consensus* of the Christian world steadily in favor of Christianity.

Perhaps I should add that the authority of which I here speak, is a purely moral authority. It is not political or judicial, or in any sense coercive. With the authority of force or punishment, I have no sympathy. It is no less revolting now to follow the infidel, as such, with denunciation and cursing, than it was in former times to follow him with the sword, the thumb-screw, or the fagot. Physical pains and penalties are coarser than mental; but, considering the changed temper of the times, the former were no more out of place five hundred years ago than the latter are to-day. But moral authority has a place in the world of opinion, knowledge, and faith, and there has never been a time when men more needed to remember that such is the fact. And moral authority rests on inquiry, learning, wisdom, ability, and character, and not on the infallibility of a pope or the inspiration of a council.

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